University of Alberta

Educational Experiences of the Economically Deprived and Affluent Students

by

Awit Arzadon-Dalusong

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Educational Experiences of the Economically Deprived and Affluent Students* submitted by *Awit Arzadon-Dalusong* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Education* in *Administration of Postsecondary Education*.

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DEDICATION

To my husband, **Edward,** whose constant encouragement pushed me to become a doctor. I am what I am today because of him. And to my children, **Colleen Sabina** and **Ethan Corbin**, who taught me patience and the value of selfless love. It's an honor to be called your mother.

ABSTRACT

A key role of education is to be "the great equalizer." Schools exist to make sure that every student has a chance to excel in life regardless of his or her socio-economic status in life. However, the study found out that there are various factors preventing the schools from fulfilling its role.

Interviews, classroom observations, and collection of documents were undertaken to understand the different educational experiences of the economically deprived and affluent Filipino students. Respondents were asked to describe their views about their respective schools with special emphasis on academic achievement.

The analysis of data revealed that there is a significant difference between the educational experiences of the economically deprived and the affluent students. The economically deprived students were prepared to become blue-collar workers while the affluent were expected to attend college or university upon graduation from high school. Furthermore, the following were considered instrumental in their academic achievement: teachers, socioeconomic status, school facilities and class size.

The findings of the study revealed the problems underlying the educational system of the Philippines. Various solutions were presented to help the Department of Education address the inequalities that exist.

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Chapter 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) resident representative to the Philippines, Terrence D. Jones, stated in an article in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (2000) that "education is an effective equalizer of economic and social opportunities for people. It is the foundation of an enlightened and free society." However, there is an abundance of empirical information that shows the discrepancies in the levels of academic achievement between economic classes (e.g., Bastian et al., 1986; Brantlinger, 1993; Sexton, 1961; Howard, 1998). We have to wonder, then, what is the truth? One of the possible explanations for the apparent contradiction has been suggested by Freire (1970), who said that one culture is researching another without really understanding it, and the so-called "deprived" are compared not with middle-class reality but with middle class ideals. Another explanation may be, as William Ryan (1972) has argued is that,

> We are dealing, it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally deprived schools. And the task to be accomplished is not to revise, amend, and repair deficit children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. (p. 61)

One way to throw light on this problem in the literature is to "map" the

perspectives of the primary stakeholders: students. Accordingly, the question posed in this study is "How do affluent and economically deprived students define their respective educational experience"?

Research Interest

Toh and Farrelly (1992) posed a significant question: Is the education or training of overseas students really contributing positively to third world development and thereby meeting the basic needs of the poor majorities?

As a citizen of a third world country who has been studying in a developed nation, I find the question posed by Toh and Farrelly very meaningful and thought-provoking. In fact, it prompted me to undertake a study that is relevant to the needs of high school students in my home country, the Philippines. In addition, my interest in this issue was piqued by a paradox in the Philippine education sytem: the fact that many countries have lower educational achievements than the Philippines, but they are either richer, or they have higher levels of human development (Paredes-Japa, 2000).

One of the objectives of tertiary education in the Philippines is to provide a general education program that will assist all students to develop their potentials as human beings, to enhance the quality of citizen participation in the basic functions of society, and to promote in all students a sense of national identity, cultural consciousness,

moral integrity, and spiritual vigor. In the Philippines, the distribution of income is highly unequal and the distribution of assets is even more so. I believe that the way in which students from different economic backgrounds understand their educational experiences is the first step towards achieving the objectives of higher education in the country.

A common observation is that students from well-to-do families tend to do better academically compared to those students from economically deprived ones (e.g., Nieto, 1996; Garcia, 1999; Bowles & Gingtis, 1976). In spite of these observations, it is important to ask, "How different are the educational experiences of these students? With regard to this question, Howard (1998) made this relevant observation: An understanding of the differences in educational opportunities between the poor and affluent is developed through an understanding of injustice and inequality. The affluent have more opportunities and the poor have less and, therefore, an inequality exists. These differences in educational opportunities, the inequality, point to injustice. This explanation provides an identification of the problem but does not develop an understanding. An understanding develops through the concept of freedom. An understanding of freedom constructs a pathway to examine the differences in schooling instead of merely identifying the differences exist.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish differences and similarities in the students' understanding of their educational experiences within their academic communities. This enabled me to examine the relationship between class status of the students who participated in this study and their educational experiences.

New paradigms in research:

In designing a research study, it is important to work from a specific paradigm and methodology. This section will address each paradigm separately, as explained by Lincoln and Guba (1985), leading to the rationale for the use of the post-positivist paradigm in this study.

Quantitative inquiry has evolved over thousands of years, including three distinct different paradigms of thought: pre-positivist, positivist, and post-positivist. Each paradigm held a different view of the purpose of scientific inquiry, the role of the researcher, and the methodology involved.

In the pre-positivist paradigm, research was limited to what could be naturally observed. The role of the researcher was more of a passive observer. However, as individuals began to experiment and take a more active role, a new paradigm evolved called the positivist paradigm.

The positivist paradigm asserts that scientific laws are universal and can be discovered through experimentation on the part of the researcher. Thus, the researcher has taken a more active role in research and experimentation. Positivist researchers believe that science can explain the natural laws that govern human nature and interaction.

The positivist paradigm had an enormous impact on intellectual advancement. However, problems gradually surfaced. First, there is no single, tangible reality. People may have different interpretations of the same phenomenon. Second, it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the observer from the observed. The way the researcher frames the question, performs the experiment and interprets the results all impact the conclusion of his or her observation. Third, time and context is to be considered a universal reality. Furthermore, with the positivist paradigm a clear cause and effect is difficult to establish. Many different factors can influence natural phenomena, and many more so in the social sciences. Finally, a positivist paradigm holds that science is value-free. One's values influence the selection of research topics, how the research is conducted, and who will benefit from the results.

Thus, a new paradigm has emerged called the post-positivist paradigm. It seeks to have a deeper understanding about the world around us rather than seeing the world very objectively on the surface. Also, research is done not in a laboratory but in a natural

setting and context. The researcher's own experiences, biases, and opinion are taken into account. He or she utilizes qualitative methods to describe the behavior and feelings of the respondents. Rather than finding the "right answer", the researcher often probes the viewpoints and explanations of the respondents.

The naturalist approach was essential for this study. It is important for me to fully understand the different educational experiences of the students. This cannot be accomplished merely through a survey. Instead, I must interact closely with the participants to understand the why, not just the what and how.

Researchers have always been concerned with poor children's low levels of achievement in school, and have proposed theories from their research as to why poor children do not achieve as well as affluent children (Currier, 1923; Caswell, 1933; Daniels and Diack, 1956, 1960; Sexton, 1961; Weiner and Feldman, 1963). The research examining the correlation between the levels of academic achievement and class status increased during the 1970s. The majority of research involved reading ability since evidence showed a clear link between reading ability and academic achievement (e.g. Thorndike, 1973; Bloom, 1976).

There is an abundance of information collected by researchers about the disparities in the levels of academic achievement between economic classes (e.g. Bastian

et. al., 1986; Brantlinger, 1993; Sexton, 1961). However, there is an absence of qualitative research explaining or accounting for the differences in achievement patterns for the purpose of understanding and seeking solutions. Thus, this study was conceptualized.

Assumptions

There are two basic assumptions to be stated at the outset of this research. First, a relationship exists between class status of students and their educational aspirations. Second, students enrolled in the public high school are economically disadvantaged and students from the private high school are financially better-off.

Major research question

How do groups of economically deprived and affluent secondary students define their respective educational experiences?

Specific research questions

1. (a) What are the differences and similarities in their understanding of their educational experiences?

(b) What factors do the students consider instrumental in their level of educational achievement?

(c) What are their perceptions about the influence of financial disparity when

they enter college?

2. What is the relationship between the academic achievement of the students and their class status?

For this study, classroom observations and interviews were conducted in two schools: (a) a prominent private high school with an affluent enrollment and (b) a public high school with an impoverished student body.

This study should help educators understand the different influences which affect the perceptions of both economically deprived and affluent students. This understanding could help personnel to provide better service by improving the atmosphere and operations of their institutions that should be attuned to address the needs of their students.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

> "Not all, by any means, have started on an equal footing, and not all, by any means, have had equal opportunity, either because of different life circumstances or outright discrimination" (Toward inequality: Disturbing trends in higher education, 1999).

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one describes both Marxism and Hegel's dialectics and their explanations on the disparities in the levels of academic achievement between the economic classes. Part two broadly spans the theoretical perspective on the differences and similarities of the educational experiences of students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Part three, on the other hand, deals with the theories relating academic achievement of students and social class.

In this study, the review of related literature is intended to establish a current understanding so that these "truths" can be compared to the findings of the study. However, it is important to note that most of the literature gathered were studies conducted in the US. No related study was found in the Philippines and furthermore, there is a lack of qualitative research on the topic.

Marxism and dialectics

Hegel's theory of dialectics provides an explanation for disparities in the levels of

academic achievement between affluent and economically deprived students. It gives an understanding of the relationship among institutions within society and can, therefore, provide a meaning for the relationship between class status and education (Howard, 1998). The theory of dialectics falls within a Marxist framework. Liston (1988) argued for the importance of clarity in terminology in constructing a Marxist framework because

> "due to a variety of biographical, intellectual, and political factors people tend to dismiss automatically a Marxist analysis... [and] those who are already committed to the radical camp, when examining radical analysis, tend to nod their heads in agreement without questioning the theory's descriptive or explanatory accuracy" (p. 13).

Marxist research has a tradition of raising issues that confront the dominant ideology (e.g., Apple, 1982; Anyon, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Willis, 1980; Howard, 1998). The works of Marx often raise more questions than answers. However, for the purpose of this study, a decision was made to use the Marxian perspective to establish and examine the relationship between school achievement and class status of students. To understand the relationship within a Marxist framework, the laws of dialectical development and the concepts of oppression and class need to be fully defined and developed (Howard, 1998).

Liston (1988) argued that:

> If we are going to examine Marxist explanations, we must understand three

> features: what is being explained (the object of explanation); how it is being explained (the form of explanation); and the concepts employed in the explanation (the conceptual framework). Once we are clear about these three aspects of explanation, we can begin to evaluate empirically the factual claims and compare and contrast alternative explanations. (p. 38)

Howard (1998) identified these three needed features as a means of constructing a theoretical framework that extends beyond the constructed boundaries to engage in a critical discourse. A study's significance resides in the effectiveness of engaging the research community in discourse about the issue examined. Without this needed discourse, the issue remains unexamined and consequently change is impeded. In Howard's (1998) view, "the issue of educational inequality between the affluent and poor has been unchanged and unchallenged for too long" (p. 24).

Marxism applies itself to perhaps the most complex of all non-linear systems—human society. The colossal interaction of countless individuals, politics, and economics make a human society a very complex system. Hegel's theory of dialectics contends that institutions of society (e.g., schools) are not self-contained in a world of their own but are shaped by the way they relate to other institutions (Howard, 1998, p. 26). Earlier, Apple (1978) posited that schools and kindred cultural-ideological institutions "create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination" (p. 3).

Thus, social, political, and economic values are already imbedded "in our curricula, in our modes of teaching, and in our principles, standards, and forms of evaluation" (Apple, 1979, pp. 8-9).

To further explain the laws of dialectical development, it is necessary to understand the following three laws proposed by Engels (1954): the law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa, the law of the unity of opposites, and the law of negation.

The law of transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa . This law explains how people see only the big change but cannot or do not see the preceding small, cumulative changes that appear to arrive full-blown, or at least seem unaccountably larger. The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa expresses the fact that :

> "Change in nature and society does not simply involve a slow and continuous increase and decrease in the growth of things. At a certain point, new qualities emerge as a sharp 'break' with the past, or a 'leap' into the future occurs" (Dialego, 1978, p. 20).

Howard (1998) stated that:

> "this law is important in understanding the development of institutions within the societal context of their relationship, places, and functions" (p. 26).

The law of the unity of opposites. The unity of opposites recognizes the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society). The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world in their "self-movement", in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. Development is the "struggle" of opposites.

In this regard, Dialego (1978) proposed that

> "The elements which make up an object in nature or in society are at once connected with one another and at the same time, in a state of constant struggle.... Everything, therefore, constitutes a 'unity of opposites'" (p. 20).

This law can be explained by how workers and their bosses are locked in class struggle. Howard (1998) stated:

> "An example of this law is the relationship between capitalists and workers. Capitalists cannot exist without exploiting workers, by not paying workers according to the worth of their labor, and workers cannot survive without selling their labor" (p. 27).

Workers can win only if they destroy the ruling class, its armed power, its state apparatus, its culture, and its philosophy. Workers and bosses are not united on a philosophical or political basis.

The law of negation. This law states that change does not simply erase the past.

This law can be explained by using what is beneficial in previous processes is used to bring forth and improve new ones and discard what is worn out or harmful. Dialego (1978) said that negation involves the "movement of something from an old stage to a new stage, so that the elements of the old are carried forward and reworked into the new" (p. 21).

As stated by Howard (1998):

> these laws provide a means to develop an understanding of discrepancies in educational opportunities between the wealthy and the poor. The division between the wealthy and poor within a capitalist society supports the structures of societal institutions and prevents change. The inequalities in schooling resulting from class status of students, therefore, are cemented in the structural divisions between the wealthy and poor in society, and maintained through the oppressive nature of class stratification. (p. 27)

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS

Social inequality: Class structure with stratification

Salaman (1972) explained social stratification as a way of referring to and classifying certain sorts of structural characteristics and constraints, notably those deriving from the organization of economic processes and the division of labor. Stratification, by whatever definition, has to do with socially structured inequalities and deprivations, of various sorts, and from various sources, and the relationships between them. (p. 23)

According to Marx, social inequality exists because of the struggle between ruling capitalists and exploited workers. "The bourgeoisie are 'the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor,' the proletariat are 'the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live'" (Marx and Engels, 1967, p. 79; and Ugbor, 1991, p. 44).

To illustrate the realities of social inequality, Kumar-D'souza (1976) recounted the conversation of a group of young men in India:

> "'They' told me that education was for everybody –that we are all equal –that we could all go to school.... but 'they' didn't tell me that I had to have money for books, for examination fees, for clothes, for....'They gave me an education that has isolated me.... I do not understand what is around me....why are a few people in my village rich? Why do they own hundreds of acres of land and why do many possess only a few acres and why are most of the people landless? Why do the rich landlords who are only a few make the decisions for the many...? I know that we are poor, I know that we are unemployed, I know that we are illiterate and uneducated...but why...? 'They' never told me why...." (p. 44)

Critical Consciousness

Freire (1989) distinguished between the power of "the elite" and the potential power or agency of "the masses." The elite dominate, destroy, crush, and place fear in the minds of the people. In contrast, the people or the masses are consistently

dehumanized by such practices during epochal transitions and engender varying degrees of transitive consciousness.

Consciousness-raising is primarily based on Freire's influence. It is a group pedagogy of the oppressed which seeks to help the participants achieve transformed consciousness. Freire is the individual who was most associated with consciousness-raising in Latin America. His method was based on a combination of Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism as well as social science and philosophical tracts. The critical tenet of Freire's theory is his rejection of mass education which, according to him, imposes silence and passivity, stifles criticism and makes participants objects rather than subjects of reality. His contention is that education cannot be neutral; it should be participatory and involve self-reflection and critical thought; it must be linked to societal questions, especially political and economic struggles between social classes. Consciousness-raising sometimes is associated with skills transmission which aims to improve literacy and numeracy skills of the participants in the effort to empower them in their economic and political struggles (Belle, 1986).

Freire suggested the three stages listed below in the progression by which critical consciousness is attained (Heaney, 1995):

First stage: Semi-intransitive consciousness. Semi-intransitive consciousness

is the state of those whose sphere of perception is limited, whose interests center almost totally around matters of survival, and who are impermeable to challenges situated outside the demands of biological necessity.

Second stage: Naïve transivity. Friere characterized this stage of consciousness by an oversimplification of problems, nostalgia for the past, an underestimation of ordinary people, a strong tendency to gregariousness, a disinterest in investigation, a fascination with fanciful explanations of reality, and by the practice of polemics rather than dialogue. Naïve transitivity is never totally and irrevocably surpassed for all who enter the learning process; this remains a lifelong task.

Third stage: Critical transitivity. This stage is characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems; by testing one's own findings and openness to revision and reconstruction; by the attempt to avoid distortion when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them; by rejecting passivity; by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics; by receptivity to the new without rejecting the old; and by permeable, interrogative, restless, and dialogical forms of life.

Literacy work is generally recognized as most effective when undertaken by or in the context of community-based organization, and least effective when directly managed by a large, bureaucratic system of schooling (Merzirow, Darkenwald, & Knox, 1975;

Hunter & Harmon, 1979; Healey, 1995). Literacy and other basic skills can be acquired with astonishing speed when the development of those skills is linked with other activities, the intended outcome of which is change in conditions of oppression (Adams, 1975; Freire, 1970; Shor, 1987; Healey, 1995).

Theory of Economic and Social Reproduction

Nieto (1996) described the theory of economic and social reproduction as one which provides an understanding that academic failure and success are not unintended outcomes but instead are quite logical results of differentiated schooling.

According to the theory, the function of the school is apparent in everything from its physical structure to its curriculum and instruction. Schools keep the poor in their place by teaching them how to become good workers. Affluent students, on the other hand, are taught how to manage and control the working class. Nieto (1992) stated that "schools therefore reproduced the status quo and not only reflected but actually maintained structural inequalities based on class, race and gender"(p. 195).

To complement the economic and social reproduction theory, Ugbor (1991) cited several theoretical positions in an attempt to explain how environmental factors affect school performance or educational attainment or both (p. 82):

The **culture of poverty** thesis claims that working class children perform poorly

in school because the culture in their homes lacks the ambition, motivation, value orientation, language and modes of thinking required for school success.

The **material disadvantage** thesis argues that so-called lack of interest on the part of the poor is actually a reflection of material incapacity.

Self-fulfilling prophecy (expectancy or labelling theory) contends that school personnel are servants and agents performing political and ideological functions for the dominant classes. Consciously or unconsciously, their stereotype about the "good" student tends to discriminate against working class children in the matter of curricular tracking and being supportive in class.

The **cultural capital** thesis argues that the material advantages of wealthy homes confer on the students the cultural privilege, ethos or code which tallies with the school climate, thus promoting educational achievement and attainment. (Haramlambos, 1981, pp. 193-217; Tyler, 1977, pp. 101-102)

Deficit Theories

Nieto (1996) defined deficit theories as those that:

> Hypothesize that some people are deficient in intelligence or achievement or both, either because of genetic inferiority (because of their racial background) or because of cultural deprivation (because of their cultural background or because they have been deprived of cultural experiences and activities deemed by the majority to be indispensable for growth and development). (p. 390)

The theory of genetic inferiority in the 1960s has had a large impact on the schooling of poor children. This theory maintains that academic achievement is a result of a student's innate cognitive ability. The theory of cultural deprivation links school failures of students to several factors in their communities such as the social, cultural, and economic impacts. The fact that affluent parents can afford to enrich the educational experiences of their children (e.g., going to museums, travelling to different places) contribute to the latter's academic success. Howard (1998) contended that the theory maintains the superiority of the dominant culture by defining it in terms of being right and normal. Values and ideologies outside these definitions for normal are considered inferior and inadequate.

Casserly and Garrett (1977) did not ignore the discrepancies in educational opportunities between the affluent and the poor, but they argued against sharing of opportunities with the working class because resources for education are limited, and therefore, need to be given more to the wealthy to avoid reducing opportunity for those capable of profiting from it (Howard, 1998). They further argued that certain classes in society are by definition culturally and socially deprived.

In conclusion, Howard (1998) stated that:

the cultural deficit theory "maintains that academic achievement is a result of a

> student's innate cognitive ability. The differences in achievement patterns among groups are a result of differences in levels of intelligence. Those who fail are cognitively deficit. Specifically, the poor do not achieve at the same level as the affluent in schools because the poor do not have the same innate abilities as the affluent (p. 44)

Resistance Theory

Erickson (1987) maintained that while cultural differences may cause some initial school failures and misunderstandings, it is only when they become entrenched over time that not learning--a consistent pattern of refusing to learn--becomes the outcome of schooling. Signs of resistance include misbehavior, vandalism, and poor relationships with teachers and the most extreme form of refusing education is dropping out.

Since no simple explanation accounts for achievement or failure, Nieto (1992) suggested that it is clear that no one theory of achievement entirely explains why some students succeed and others fail in school. It is necessary to understand school achievement as contextual and as an interactive, personal, cultural, political, and societal process in which all of these factors affect one another in sometimes competing and contradictory ways.

Similarly, Boudon (1974) proposed a class positional theory of educational attainment. He stated that a stratification system confers school-related cultural advantages and disadvantages on middle-class and working-class children. Furthermore,

Ugbor (1991) maintained that even if such cultural differences were held constant, a more serious form of educational inequality would still exist due to differential positions in the class structure.

Okeem (1980, cited in Ugbor, 1980, pp.90-91), in his study of the equalization of educational opportunities in Nigeria, rhetorically asked whether capitalist Nigeria can implement social goals of equality. He enumerated the major constraints in the achievement of equality:

> Capitalism is rooted in and flourishes by inequality so that it is inconsistent with its philosophy to advocate the provision of equality whether in educational opportunities or in anything else. Another constraint is that of failure of politicians and policy makers to clarify or operationalize what they mean by "equalization of educational opportunities" and similar concepts. The third constraint is the existence of a class society. Class conditioned differentials in socialization techniques make educability easier and school performance better for middle-class, rather than for working class children. The fourth constraint is the existence of striking urban or rural discrepancies in the provision of infrastructure facilities. The final constraint is an attitudinal one, but one which is linked with the constraints in a class society. Even when educational facilities have been made available and "freely" accessible to all, the differential orientations resulting from socialization in a class society would still lead to unequal consumption or utilization of such facilities. (p. 8)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS AND SOCIAL CLASS

Poverty in the Philippines

As of 1994, 4.5 million families or 27.3 million Filipinos, comprising 35.5% of total families and 40.6% of the total population, were officially considered poor. That is, their annual per capita incomes fell below the poverty threshold or poverty line, the critical amount of income necessary to satisfy nutritional requirements (National Statistics Office Survey, 1994). A composite picture of a typical poor Filipino household shows that the head of the household has little or no schooling (Monsod, 1996). In fact, primary school education is the highest educational attainment of 72% of all poor households.

Many Filipino families are trapped in poverty because the parents are unable to improve their current livelihood. Bound by lack of education, poor health, and without savings, the older members are often caught in the rut of earning for their daily subsistence and are unable to look for new opportunities, learn new skills, or move to other promising locations.

Income-based measures of poverty assume a person's or family's deprivation stems mainly from an inability to earn or obtain sufficient private income. There is undoubtedly a connection: the poorest 30% of Filipino families also show a very low educational attainment, and only 20% of these poor families are high school graduates.

(Monsod, 1996)

Marx and Engels (1948) believed that the institution of poverty serves an important and functional role within a capitalist society. It is a fact that income distribution in the Philippines is highly unequal. Moreover, the distribution of assets or wealth is even more unequal. Without this division between the poor and the affluent, capitalism could not function because the hierarchy stabilizing capitalism would no longer exist. Howard (1998) stated that "poverty, therefore, continues to sustain itself through its relationship with the institution of wealth, and vice versa." Further, Althusser (1971) argued that the deep divisions between economic classes require other institutions, such as schools, for its sustenance.

Howard (1998) also stated that:

> educational institutions serve this critical sustaining purpose by preparing future citizens to take a particular economic role in society. Educating children for their roles within a capitalist society sustains the economic structure, which subsequently reproduces the class division. The relationship between the economic structure of capitalism and educational institutions provides a means to sustain the inequalities within society. (p. 35)

The relationship between the economic structure of capitalism and educational institutions provides a means to sustain the inequalities within society. Bowles and Gintis (1976) identified a relationship between the social relations of school and work by stating

that :

> The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system, we believe, through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production.... By attuning young people to a set of social relations similar to those of the work place, schooling attempts to gear the development of personal needs to its requirements. (p. 131)

Giroux (1992) criticized the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) for being overly reductionistic and one-dimensional in explaining the sole function of schools as "to reproduce the dictates of the state in the economic order" (p. 13). However, Bowles and Gintis' work provides the foundation for understanding the relationship between the class status of students and their education.

Freire (1970) has argued that educational initiatives cannot expect to lead to academic or intellectual success under social circumstances that are oppressive. Furthermore, Freire (1970), Cummins (1986), and Pearl (1991) advocated that curriculum --no matter how successful it is in general--is tarnished when students experience social oppression. They suggested that only a "pedagogy of empowerment can fulfill the lofty goals of educational equity and achievement" (Garcia, 1999, p. 111).

The serious consequences of poverty were emphasized by Garcia (1999) who stated that:

> When a group of people is exposed, over generations, to poverty and debilitating

> socioeconomic conditions, the teaching and learning process for children at home, in the community, and in the school will suffer. The result is disastrous, long-term educational failure and social disruption of family and community. (p. 111)

IQ and Achievement

The works cited above examined the relationship between education and class status. They identified that class status is a significant factor in students' levels of academic achievement. Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argued that the different levels of academic achievement are a result of the difference in intelligence levels of students. Howard (1998) reported that "poor children have lower levels of intelligence and, therefore, achieve academically at lower levels than affluent students" (p. 39). Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) theory contends that:

> if differences in mental abilities are inherited, and if success requires those abilities, and if earnings and prestige depend on success, then social standing (which reflects earnings and prestige) will be based to some extent on inherited differences among people. (p. 105)

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) believed that there is a relationship between level of intelligence and type of occupation; this provides a reason for the division between the affluent and poor. They explained the importance of intelligence by stating that:

> low intelligence is a stronger precursor of poverty than low socioeconomic background.... If you have to choose, is it better to be born smart or rich? The answer is unequivocally 'smart'.... When the picture is complicated by adding the

> effects of sex, marital status, and years of education, intelligence remains more important than any of them, with marital status running a close second. Among people who are both smart and well educated, the risk of poverty approaches zero. (p. 127)

Herrnstein and Murray also proposed that the difference in educational opportunities of the poor and affluent is not a determinant of the achievement of students. Although the poor have fewer educational opportunities, it is intelligence that makes them achieve academically. Gould (1981) stated that the position taken by Herrnstein and Murray represents an ideology with a strong tradition in supporting innate intelligence as the most significant determinant in academic achievement patterns.

However, Ugbor (1991) contradicted the beliefs of Herrnstein and Murray . He contended that I.Q. ideology serves to legitimize and rationalize the class stratification system. Economic success has little or nothing to do with I.Q. or school achievement or both. Furthermore, he stated:

> By helping to make existing patterns of inequality seem natural and justified, "I.Q.-ism" and "credentialism" work systematically to ensure the (resisted) reproduction of both class relations and those of ethnic-racial and gender domination. (p. 93)

Achievement Gap

There has been several studies about the achievement gap that separates the low-

income and minority youngsters from other students. For more than a generation, there has been an emphasis on improving the education of the poor and minority students. However, Haycock (2001) further suggested:

> To increase the achievement levels of minority and low-income students, there is a need to focus on high standards, curriculum and teachers. Although everybody wants to take credit for narrowing the gap, nobody wants to take responsibility for widening it. So, for a while, there was mostly silence. (p. 1).

In an open letter to President George Bush, Haycock (2001) proclaimed:

> Always make it clear that you believe that poor children and children of color can achieve at high levels if they are taught at high levels and get help along the way. The evidence is clearly on your side, but many people cling to the old myths that poor children can't learn. Use your opportunities to teach the people. Share concrete examples of what you mean by low expectations. Tell the stories of schools and districts that are proving that poor kids can learn. (p. 2)

In May 2002, the University of the State of New York, The New York State Board of Regents had a forum on the Key Strategies to Close the Gaps in Student Performance. They concluded that :

> Closing the gaps in student achievement, especially in high poverty and high minority schools, requires both a commitment of new resources and the redirection of existing resources. Key funding priorities involve money to recruit and train teachers, to provide greater access to technology to improve classroom instruction, to provide extra time and help for students and to retain and recruit effective school leaders. (p. 1)

Brief history of Philippine education

Education in the Philippines has undergone several stages of development from the pre-Spanish times to the present. As early as in pre-Magellanic times, education was informal, unstructured, and devoid of methods. Children were provided more vocational training and less academic training (3 Rs) by their parents and in the houses of tribal tutors.

The pre-Spanish system of education underwent major changes during the Spanish colonization. The tribal tutors were replaced by the Spanish missionaries. Education was religion-oriented and was for the elite, especially in the early years of Spanish colonization. Access to education by the Filipinos was liberalized in 1863 through the enactment of the Educational Decree, which provided for the establishment of at least one primary school for boys and girls in each town under the responsibility of the municipal government; and the establishment of a normal school for male teachers under the supervision of the Jesuits. Primary education was free and the teaching of Spanish was compulsory. Education during that period was inadequate, repressive, and controlled.

The defeat of the Spanish regime by American forces paved the way for Aguinaldo's Republic under a revolutionary government. The schools maintained by

Spain for more than three centuries were closed for a time but were reopened on August 29, 1898 by the Secretary of the Interior. The Burgos Institute in Malolos, the Military Academy of Malolos, and the Literary University of the Philippines were established. A system of free and compulsory elementary education was established by the 1899 Malolos Constitution.

An adequate secularized and free public school system during the first decade of American rule was established upon the recommendation of the Schumann Commission. Free primary instruction that trained the people for the duties of citizenship and avocation was enforced by the Taft Commission per instructions of President McKinley. Chaplains and noncommissioned officers were assigned to teach using English as the medium of instruction.

A highly centralized public school system was installed in 1901 by the Philippine Commission by virtue of Act No. 74 (Public School System Act). The implementation of this Act created a big shortage of teachers so the Philippine Commission authorized the Secretary of Public Instruction to bring to the Philippines 600 Thomasite teachers from the United States.

The Reorganization Act of 1916 provided the "Filipinization" of all secretaries except the Secretary of Public instruction, which was still headed by an American.

After the American regime, the Japanese invaded the country and took over the Philippine government. Japanese educational policies were embodied in Military Order No, 2 in 1942. The Philippine Executive Commission established the Commission of Education, Health and Public Welfare and schools were reopened in June 1942. On October 14, 1943, the Japanese –sponsored Republic created the Ministry of Education. Under the Japanese regime the teaching of Tagalog, Philippine history and character education was reserved for Filipinos. Love of work and dignity of labor were emphasized. On February 27, 1945, the Department of Instruction was made part of the Department of Public Instruction.

In 1947, by virtue of Executive Order No. 94, the Department of Instruction was changed to the Department of Education. During this period, the regulation and supervision of public and private schools belonged to the Bureau of Public and Private Schools.

In 1972, it became the Department of Education and Culture by virtue of Proclamation 1081 and the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1978 by virtue of a Presidential Decree. Thirteen regional offices were created and major organizational changes were implemented in the educational system.

The Education Act of 1982 created the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports

which later became the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in 1987. The structure of DECS remained relatively unchanged until 1994 when the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was created. In 1995 the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) was established to supervise tertiary degree programs and non-degree technical-vocational programs.

Brief Background of the Philippine Secondary School System

The secondary school system of the Philippines is a 4-year course of study with a curriculum composed of academic and vocational subjects. However, there are special schools for sciences and special sciences classes established by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology. The New Secondary Education Curriculum (NSEC) was implemented in 1989 which changed the 1973 Revised Education Program (RSEP). The new curriculum is student-centered and community-oriented. Values education is offered as a separate subject aside from being integrated in the teaching of other subject areas. Each subject area has its own Desired Learning Competencies (DLC), provided by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, in line with the textbook for the subject. Each subject area has a time frame of 40 minutes daily, except for Science and Technology and Home Economics which are 80 minutes daily. Computer lessons have been integrated

in Home Economics and Technology, Science and Mathematics subjects. There are 8 subject areas in the New Secondary Education Curriculum (NSEC), namely: English, Filipino, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Technology, Physical Education, Health and Music (PEHM), Technology and Home Economics, and Values Education. The DECS Order No. 2 s. 1993 increased the number of school days from 185 to 200 in a school year.

About 18 million elementary and high school students are now enrolled in public and private schools, 543,390 or 3.3 percent more than the 1999 school year. The Professional Regulation Commission is in charge of the issuance of professional teacher licenses to individuals in accordance with the value-consensus and the knowledge-base of the profession. The specific requirement for the board examinations of professional teachers is a degree in BS Education, BSEED or BSCED or its equivalent bachelor's degree in secondary education or its equivalent with minor or major subjects or a bachelor's degree in English, Filipino, Math, Natural Sciences, Social Studies, PEHM, Technology, Home Economics or Values Education with 18 units in Professional Education or a Bachelor's degree not mentioned with 18 units in Professional Education. However, a teacher's license is not a requirement for employment in the profession.

In January 9, 2002, the Department of Education finalized the guidelines for the hiring of 15,000 more public elementary and high school teachers. Roco (2002) said: The guidelines empower school heads, cut red tape, speed up teacher's receipt of their salaries, and promotes quality in the choice of teacher applicants. Furthermore, greater transparancy will characterize the process of hiring new teachers. The allocation of teaching items will depend on the needs of the schools. (p. A36)

Conceptual Framework

Based on the related literature, the differences and similarities in the students' understanding of their educational experiences vary tremendously. It was emphasized in several studies that the economically deprived students were prepared to perform blue-collar functions while the affluent were expected to manage the working class. Thus, it can be expected that Filipino students belonging to both ends of the social class spectrum, may view their educational experiences as such.

Morse and Field (1995) defined a conceptual framework as, "A theoretical model developed to show relationships between constructs. It is often used in qualitative research for the identification of variables" (p. 241). This study was guided by the conceptual framework model depicted as Figure 1.1 on page 35. This model illustrates the different factors that affect the academic achievement of students.

Model 1.1. Relationship between academic achievement of students and their social class

Summary

In an attempt to identify the different interpretations regarding why poor students perform at lower levels of achievement than their affluent counterparts, two salient theoretical models were presented in this chapter, the deficit theories--genetic and the economic and social reproduction theory.

As stated previously in this chapter, the deficit theory maintains that academic achievement is a result of a student's cognitive ability. Proponents of this theory believe that the poor do not have the same innate abilities as the affluent. The works of Herrnstein and Murray (1994) echo the proposition of the deficit theory by suggesting that poor students have lower levels of intelligence, and are thus academically inferior compared to the affluent students. Howard (1998) classified this body of work as "not only classist and racist, but [it] simply does not adequately explain the failure of so many students" (p. 45). To conclude that the affluent naturally do better in schools than the poor students clearly dismisses important aspects (e.g., structures of schools, the relationship between student and teachers) and thus counters equality and justice (Giroux, 1983; Nieto, 1996).

The economic and social reproduction theory "tends to explain school achievement in an overly reductionalistic and one-dimensional approach by contending that the sole function of schools is to reproduce the classes" (Giroux, 1992; Howard,

1998). The theory does not include the realm of individual action and, consequently, hinders an understanding of the role that students and their communities have in the construction of school practices (Apple & Weiss, 1983; Giroux, 1992; Nieto, 1996; Howard, 1998). However, the theory acknowledges the fact that educational institutions are not in worlds of their own which establishes a need to examine the political and social forces influencing the practices and policies of schools (Freire, 1989; Macedo, 1994; Howard, 1998).

Many theories have examined the relationship between class status and academic achievement. Researchers have depended on theories to establish this bridge which establishes imposed, predetermined understandings and interpretations instead of terminology emerging from the lived experience (Freire, 1989; Van Manen, 1990; Howard, 1998). What is missing in the body of research is the connecting of this relationship to the understandings of the poor and affluent about their educational experiences (Howard, 1998, p.46). This study attempted to bridge the theoretical gaps by connecting economic background of students with their educational experiences in a qualitative study.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHOD

Data Gathering

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between class status and the various educational experiences of economically deprived and affluent high school students. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative research was design guided the study.

Carspecken and Apple's (1992) model of gathering data for qualitative inquiry contains five stages (as follows) that was appropriate here:

1. Researcher takes a passive observer role where data are collected from a third-person perspective.

2. Researcher conducts a preliminary analysis of the data collected during the first stage to develop guidelines for directing.

3. Researcher takes a new role by generating new data through a one-on-one process (e.g. interviews) with the informants.

4. Researcher compares the routines and cultural forms of the two groups of people to describe the relationship between the two.

5. Researcher explains the relationship between the two groups of people (pp.

513-514).

I operationalizated the first stage by using an appropriate instrument for classroom observation as a guide. Furthermore, I gathered information from different sources (i.e. classroom documents, teachers' comments, etc.) to triangulate the findings of the study.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study to examine my role as a passive observer during class discussions. This helped me test the effectiveness and appropriateness of the observation and recording techniques that I wanted to use in the study.

The pilot study was conducted in a public high school in Dagupan City, the Philippines. Out of the five schools I selected to participate in the entire study, it was the only school where the principal allowed me to conduct a pilot study. It was the principal who chose the 12 participants who took part in the study. I presented the classroom observation instrument to the participants for their guidance. Also, the participants were interviewed individually.

The pilot study provided valuable information on clarifying vague or misleading interview questions as well, the participants were asked about their overall impressions of the interview process. Furthermore, I was able to get a feel of how I should conduct myself during classroom observation.

Classroom Observations

The primary source of data for this research was classroom observations. As Howard (1998) stated, classroom observations "establish a level of familiarity with the students and teacher that permit access beyond a surface understanding of the community" (p. 67). This helped me to develop a non-threatening presence within the community.

My classroom observations also helped me to understand the instructional methods employed by the instructors. They assisted in identifying tasks presented to the students and how the teacher explained and provided reasons for these tasks. These observations helped me understand the role of the students in class discussions and activities.

The primary purpose of classroom observations was to examine the instruction of the teachers by identifying the specific tasks presented to students and how these tasks were explained. Observation of instruction provided a direct means for identifying the relationship between the teachers' understanding of achievement and the implementation of these understandings. A secondary purpose was to identify the various interactions between students and teacher, and to understand the various roles of the students in class discussion and activities. The observation of the students' roles in the classroom provided additional opportunities to understand the educational experiences of the students.

Wittrock (1986, cited in Ratsoy, Friesen, & Holdaway, 1987, pp. 516-517)

provided the guidelines for the classroom observation of this study. He noted that the following variables have been consistently related to observation and student achievement:

1. pacing of instruction;
2. time on task;
3. clear expectations for student performance;
4. well organized and planned activities;
5. smooth-running academic activities;
6. brief and orderly transitions;
7. compliance, by students, with teacher's directions;
8. clear sets of procedures and rules;
9. teacher awareness;
10. teacher ability to deal with several activities;
11. momentum;
12. variety of materials used;
13. clarity of teacher communication;
14. use of sustaining feedback;
15. appropriate mixture of question types; and
16. warmth and empathy.

I conducted the observations during the school year 2000-2001. I observed two sections each from the public and private high schools for an entire month in order to establish a basis for comparing students' experiences in the two schools.

Interviews

In selecting the key student informants, purposive sampling was used. However, I made sure that both genders were equally represented in this study. The teacher informants were also randomly selected, however, no gender variables were considered.

Morse (1998) suggested the following techniques in conducting interviews:

The researcher should keep the first interviews with participants broad, letting the

> participants "tell their stories".... When participants in the setting eventually begin to understand what the study is about and to recognize the special interests of the researcher, they may facilitate the inquiry by offering information. (p. 74)

Formal interviews with teachers. The study involved four teachers (two teachers from the public high school and two teachers from the private high school) randomly selected form a list provided by the head or principal. The interviews with the teachers helped me explore the teachers' understandings of achievement, teaching and learning. Furthermore, they enabled me to consult the instructors to validate the findings. However, the interviews were not reported in this study since one of the teachers objected to have his interview details published.

Formal interviews with students. The study involved 8 senior high school students (four students representing the economically deprived students and four students representing the affluent) from the two same high schools. As stated earlier, students enrolled in the public high school were assumed to be economically disadvantaged since a majority of its students belong to the D and E social classes and students from the private high school were assumed to be financially better off.

The interviews with the students enabled me to understand the students' response to the teachers' tasks as well as understand what occured in class and the various interactions among the students and the teacher.

Collection of Documents

I collected school artifacts to help me understand the culture of the communities of both schools. Oliver (1998) stated that, as with any culture, artifacts represent and allow an outsider to develop a deeper understanding. Howard (1989) suggested collecting documents such as student records, personal files, and standardized exam results would not help understand how the community defines "academic achievement" as these documents identify achievement outside their lived experiences. On the other hand, assignments, examinations, worksheets and any other written documents transmitting information between teacher and student were collected to help me understand the culture within the community, especially the interaction between the students and their teachers.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the ability of the researcher to persuade his or her audience "that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (Lincoln and Guba, p.290). Trustworthiness can be established by using certain criteria, including, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

The design of this study attended to the following concepts:

Credibility deals with the question of how the findings of the study match reality. This is achieved by ensuring genuine similarity in form (Connelly & Clandinin, p.7),

between participant perceptions and researcher conclusions. To ensure credibility of the findings, I formally "member checked" (Guba, 1981, p.80) the results by sending back the findings of the study to the participants to ensure that these were accurate and representative.

Transferability refers to the determination of the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other respondents (Lincoln and Guba, 1987, p. 247). Data from the interviews and observations provided a "thick description" (p. 248) to help the readers of this study determine whether the findings of the study can be transferred to a similar context.

Dependability refers to the determination of whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if it were replicated with similar respondents in a similar context. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I attempted to authenticate the results of the study by examining the data gathered in different forms during the research. The list of documents are as follows: (a) tapes of interviews (b) transcriptions of interviews (c) assignments (d) corrected examination papers and (e) worksheets.

Confirmability refers to the ability to verify the data. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, it serves as a means of establishing the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry, and not by the

biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher.

As it is almost impossible to remove the "observer effect" in the research process, I will "practise reflexivity" (Guba, 1981, p. 87), endeavoring to understand my own perceptions as a researcher. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) stated,

> It may represent the beginning of understanding, a necessary condition on the way to making the researcher's biases explicit and to grasping the place of subjectivity in research. Although we cannot absolutely specify what the sufficient conditions are for this to occur, we believe that the conditions relate to a personal encounter with self in the course of research. Aware that there is something to seek, to uncover, and to understand yourself, you are ready to be informed through the research experience. (pp.100-101)

Data Analysis

Analysis of data was concurrent with the collection of data. This enabled the researcher to establish the direction for gathering future data.

The data collected were examined and organized according to themes which emerged during analysis. Once the themes were identified, the researcher collaborated with the student and teacher informants during the interviews and unstructured conversations to conduct another level of analysis in the identification of primary themes.

All transcripts were double-checked for accuracy by the researcher and informants, and collaborative sessions were held to include the informants' voices in the

analytical process.

Ethics

A letter explaining the purpose and nature of the research was given to the participants at the outset of the study. Students under 18 were given two consent forms (one for the students and another for their parents). Furthermore, formal written requests were given to the two principals to allow me to conduct my study in their respective schools.

The participants were assured that their identities, their responses and their opinions were treated with the strictest confidence. The researcher assigned pseudonyms for the public and private high schools and the participants. Moreover, participants were assured that they could opt out at any time. If one of the participants decided to opt out, any documents, videotapes or audiotapes that had been collected connecting them to the study would have been destroyed immediately. I also ensured that deception was not being used in the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants in person prior to the initial interview and classroom observation. All participants remained in the study. Data obtained during the research were kept secure and destroyed when the study was completed.

Chapter 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE PARTICIPANTS

Forest Knolls High School and Woodland Hills High School

I chose two high schools for this study. Forest Knolls High is known as one of the most expensive private high schools in the country. In contrast, Woodland Hills is a public high school that caters to one of the poorest communities in an urban city north of Manila.

Forest Knolls High School. Forest Knolls School is a 4-hectare private school located in an exclusive subdivision at the heart of a metropolitan city in the Philippines. The student population represents the wealthiest sector of the city's community. The tuition is PhP 75,000 (CAD 1,666.67) per year excluding books, uniforms, miscellaneous fees, laboratory fees, school supplies, field trips and lunch.

Forest Knolls was founded in 1945. It started with 5 school children, most of whom were relatives of the founder. It prides itself on producing top CEOs, politicians, and other successful professionals in the country.

Today, there are 288 students at Forest Knolls High with a ratio of one teacher for every 11 students. Of these students, 162 are female and 126 male. The faculty consists of 30 members of which 19 have master's degrees and 2 are doctoral degree holders.

There are 19 female faculty members and 11 males.

As in previous years, all of the graduates of Forest Knolls attend college or university. Most of them are now at the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, and Dela Salle University. From the 2001 graduates, 5 decided to pursue their tertiary education in the United States.

The presence of security and maintenance personnel is highly visible anywhere inside in the campus. Students address the janitors and guards as *manong or kuya* , Filipino words indicating respect for the elders. Visitors are greeted with respect, by both the school staff and students.

All four classrooms of the senior high school are fully air-conditioned and well lighted. As a matter of fact, Forest Knolls is one of the first educational institutions in the Philippines to install air conditioners in all its classrooms. All rooms are tastefully decorated and are kept meticulously clean. Wide windows overlooking the lush greenery of the campus complement all the classrooms of the school. Blackboards are nonexistent in the school. One administrator explained that white boards and the use of white board markers was encouraged by the school doctor several years ago to prevent asthma and other skin diseases related to exposure to chalk dust.

Woodland Hills Public High School. Woodland Hills High is a public school located in

a bustling metropolitan city north of Manila, Philippines. As estimated by the school's statistician, "65% of the city's population fall within or below the poverty line while the rest belong to the middle-class."

There are 1,232 students at Woodland Hills and the average income per family of the student population is PhP 4,800 (CAD 107) a month according to a survey conducted by the head or principal on June 2001. Access to the public school system is free but the students are asked to shoulder their uniform expenses, book rentals and other school projects fees.

There are 46 faculty members, with 35 females and 11 males. Only the principal and assistant principal are master's degree holders. The rest of the faculty are graduates with various baccalaureate degrees.

Academically, the school ranks among the lowest according to the results of the 2001 National Secondary Aptitude Test (NSAT). The majority of the graduates do not attend college or university. Instead, they seek employment immediately after graduation. The administrators were unable to provide any statistics on where their students end up after high school graduation.

Although the total area of the campus is almost six hectares, the government has developed only two hectares. Within these two hectares are 8 school buildings, a

gymnasium, and two outdoor basketball courts. The remaining untapped four hectares are mostly swamplands.

The premises are not kept clean by the school's maintenance personnel, as evidenced by the scattered papers and candy wrappers all over the campus. Although some students wear school uniforms, a significant number of students prefer to wear casual clothes. It is also noticeable that most of them wore slippers to school. Female visitors are hesitant to enter the campus, as it is a common practice for the school's male student population to greet them with catcalls.

Inside the classrooms of the senior high school, I immediately noticed the humidity and lack of ventilation. The windows were draped with worn out and dirty curtains which made it more suffocating for the people inside the classrooms. Most of the chairs were vandalized with all sorts of names, graphics, and some even with offensive sexual drawings and language. Much chalk dust was also evident in most of the classrooms.

Student informants: Forest Knolls High

All four student informants were randomly selected from a list provided by the principal of the school. However, the researcher intentionally chose to have two males and two females. As this study is to understand the educational experiences of the community, both male and female students were selected to participate.

At the outset of this study, it was assumed that the students at Forest Knolls are affluent.

Min. Min is a 16 year old female student from Forest Knolls. She used to study in a middle-class school before transferring to her current school. Her family recently moved from a southern city of the Philippines where no educational institutions comparable to that of Forest Knolls' caliber were at the disposal of her parents. She is an only child, thus she considers herself "spoiled but well-bred."

Her family owned a logging company in the South. However, the recent crisis in the South involving terrorism and kidnapping forced them to move to the North. Her father decided to sell the logging company and recently invested in a million peso retailing business in the city of Manila.

Min is a bookworm and it's no surprise that she is one of the best students in Ms. Cua's literature class. She recently played the role of Mary Magdalene in the school play, "Jesus Christ, Superstar." After graduation, she intends to attend the University of the Philippines to pursue a degree in Mass Communications. Her dream is to become a journalist or a broadcaster.

Hannah. Hannah is a sixteen and a half year old female student. She has been a student at Forest Knolls since she was 5years old. She has an older brother who is also a graduate

from the same school. Her father is a businessman, while her mother is a full time homemaker.

Academically, Hannah believes that she is a mediocre student at Forest Knolls. She readily admits that most of her classmates are better than her. However, her extra curricular records are outstanding. She is the president of both the glee club and the senior basketball team.

Although she is not confident about her intellectual capabilities, Hannah passed the rigorous entrance examination of the Ateneo de Manila University. She intends to pursue a degree in Business Management because her father wants her to join the family business.

Stephen. Stephen is a 16 year old male student. He started attending Forest Knolls when he was 7 years old. His father is a congressman, while his mother is the mayor of a big city in the north.

Stephen is an average student in school. However, his athletic abilities make him one of the most popular male students at Forest Knolls. He was voted "crush ng bayan" for the 4th straight year.

Although Stephen's family can afford to send him to college, he got a basketball scholarship from dela Salle University. He intends to pursue a degree in Political Science after high school.

Barney. Barney is a 17 year old male student. He only started attending Forest Knolls four years ago. His family lived in the central part of Luzon but moved to the north due to the eruption of the volcano, Mt. Pinatubo. All their properties were buried in the lahar. Luckily, his father, a sales executive, was reassigned to head the operations of the company in Manila.

Barney recalls how he had a hard time adjusting to his new school. However, he credits his teachers for being so helpful. Barney is not involved in any extra curricular activities because he devotes most of his extra time catching up with lessons.

Barney will study at dela Salle University after high school and he intends to pursue a degree in Biology.

Student Informants: Woodland Hills High

All four student informants were randomly selected from a list provided by the assistant principal of the school. However, the researcher intentionally chose to have two males and two females. As this study is to understand the educational experiences of the community, both male and female students were selected to participate.

At the outset of this study, it was assumed that the students at Woodland Hills are economically deprived.

Kristen. Kristen is an 18 year old female student from Woodland Hills. She studied in

another public primary school for 6 years and waited two years before attending Woodland Hills. Since the average age of a senior high school student is 16 years old, she considers herself "too old and out of place" in this school.

Kristen is a stay-in housemaid for a wealthy family in the city. Her employers shoulder most of her expenses in school such as uniforms and textbooks. The salary she receives from them goes directly to Kristen's mother, who is also the family's laundry woman.

Kristen rates herself as a below average student. She often fails in quizzes and examinations, especially in mathematics. However, she takes pride in herself for having an almost perfect attendance record at school. She reasons, it's better for her to be in school than in her employer's house because her mother often delegates the laundry work to her.

Kristen has no intention of pursuing tertiary education. She is content with her present job as a housemaid and plans to stay with her employers for a long time.

Tasha. Tasha is a 16 year old female student from Woodland Hills. Right after graduation from another public primary school, she enrolled at Woodland Hills.

She works as a part-time dressmaker during the summer vacation in a tailor shop downtown. Tasha's mother is a housemaid, while her father has been unemployed for 4 years. She is the eldest in the family and her younger brother has polio.

She is an average student who usually receives *pasang-awa* (barely passing) grades. She particularly enjoys her Home Economics class where she is the top student in Ms. Mendoza's class.

Tasha does not intend to pursue a 4 year college degree. Instead, she plans to study in a local vocational school where she will take up a 2 year associate degree in dressmaking. Her dream is to eventually have her own shop.

Robert. Robert is a 20 year old male student from Woodland Hills. He is the oldest senior student in school. He has dropped out of school several times due to financial problems.

In a span of four years, he worked as a gasoline attendant, tricycle driver, janitor, waiter and messenger. He has 5 siblings and his parents' earnings are not enough to cover most of their expenses.

Robert is one of the hardest working students at Woodland High according to most of his teachers. He is an average student and manages to get respectable grades despite the fact that he works after class hours.

He is determined to receive his high school diploma before he turns 21. He is still uncertain if he will pursue tertiary education after his high school graduation. According to him, his priority is to earn a lot of money to help his family buy food.

BJ. BJ is a 16 year old male student. He attended a public primary school before attending Woodland High.

BJ is the youngest of a family of six. His oldest brother shoulders his everyday expenses at school. His parents are both unemployed so they rely on BJ's older siblings for financial support. BJ works for a local Chinese supplier of fishing nets whose store is located beside Woodland High.

According to the assistant principal, BJ is one of the better students at school. However, he often gets in trouble due to his temper. He has been suspended several times for instigating fist fights with his male classmates. Nonetheless, he has respectable grades.

BJ will attend a local college to pursue a degree in Commerce, courtesy of his benevolent Chinese employer.

Overview

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the two secondary schools and the participants involved in the study.

I found the two schools were very different in several aspects such as the quality of instruction, facilities and types of students. Forest Knolls displayed superiority in all aspects of instruction while Woodland Hills was very inferior in terms of students, facilities and teacher qualifications compared to the former.

The average age of the student informants at Forest Knolls was 16 years old. All of the four informants of Forest Knolls belonged to the high income bracket and most of their parents owned businesses or were top executives of big firms in Manila.

On the other hand, the average age of the student informants at Woodland Hills was 18 years old. All of the student informants were poor and most of their parents were either unemployed or blue-collar workers. Furthermore, most of them have no intention of pursuing tertiary education due to financial problems.

Chapter 5

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE AFFLUENT AND THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED STUDENTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study obtained by the researcher through personal interviews, classroom observations and document collection. The findings describe the informants' understandings of their respective educational experiences.

Interviews. Interviews with four student informants from each school were the primary source of data for this particular research. The interviews were conducted over a period of four months. Each personal interview varied in duration from 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in a setting chosen by the participant. There were a total of four interviews with each of the eight students and two interviews with each of the four teachers in the course of the research.

The initial interview helped me establish a comfortable relationship with informants. It was during the second and third interviews where sufficient data were gathered and themes were established. The final interview was dedicated to the presentation of themes to the informants as well as responding to the questions the informants had regarding the research.

Since some of the interviews were conducted using the Filipino language, I asked

the services of a Filipino language instructor to transcribe the tape recordings.

Classroom Observations. I observed four classes in total and each class was observed approximately twice a week for the four months of this study totaling 32 observations per class. These observations helped me establish a level of familiarity with the students and teachers.

The classroom observations helped me to identify the relationship between the student and teachers in the classroom context. Moreover, these classroom observations gave me additional opportunities to understand the different educational experiences of the students.

Collection of Documents. The teachers provided me with corrected homework and other worksheets of their students. These documents gave me valuable information regarding the interactions between the students and their teachers that enabled me to understand the culture within the classrooms.

Specific Question No. 1(a): What are the differences and similarities in their understanding of their educational experiences?

To address this specific question, there are four concepts considered in the understanding of the educational experiences of the students in the study. Since their educational experiences are diverse and multidimensional, the study focused on the

following four components: what the students learn in the classrooms, what is expected of them as students, the school community, and respondents' perceptions on how education is different between the affluent and the economically deprived.

Forest Knolls High School

What the students learn in the classrooms

Min believes that the curriculum at Forest Knolls is structured to empower the students. She explained further by saying:

> I think that in this school we are not spoon-fed. We are responsible for our own learning. Before my parents moved to this city, I studied in a middle-class school. There, everything came [on] a silver platter. I didn't have to think [on] my own, everything was dictated to the students. Here at Forest Knolls, we are given more independence --the power to discover our potential. I should not discount that there is still guidance from our teachers but they keep a safe distance because I feel that they know we can manage with minimal guidance.

To complement Min's beliefs, Hannah thinks that their curriculum is centered on college or university preparation. She stated:

> My older brother, a graduate from this school, is now a senior college student. He often brags about how Forest Knolls prepared him to meet the rigorous challenges of college life. I believe he is right. Sometimes, I feel like giving up because I cannot cope up with all the homework, quizzes and orals we are given. My friends from other schools do not experience the same pressure. They can manage to go to concerts in the middle of the school week! Being a student at this school, that is unthinkable! Unless of course you are a real genius. Honestly, I'm not that intelligent but because of my hard work, I manage to get respectable grades. My focus is on the future. I work hard now, but I know that it will pay off as soon as I graduate and enter college. My *kuya* (older brother) assured me that it is a lot tougher to be a student at this high school than it is to be a college student. I hope he is right.

On the other hand, Stephen believes that they are given undue pressure in the classroom. He explained by saying:

> To answer your question, it's not fun to be a student here at Forest Knolls. I do not get good grades because our topics are way beyond my abilities. I know that a lot of my classmates can grasp the lessons in a heartbeat. I am having trouble coping up because what they teach us here is for college students. The teachers just give a short explanation and it's up to you if you get it or not. Unluckily for me, most of my classmates understand the concepts right away. So, I am often left in the dark.

Barney is also one of the students having a hard time with the difficult lessons presented to them. However, he believes that teachers are very accommodating to students with comprehension problems. He stated:

> Yes, sometimes it's hard to compete with the intelligent people in this school. Nonetheless, our teachers make sure that we are all treated fairly. Our curriculum is geared towards college preparation. So we are expected to learn fast, not to mention, on our own. However, our teachers are very approachable. If you don't understand a particular lesson, the faculty room is always open for students. I think I have gone this far because I seek help when needed. I don't just sulk and pretend that there's nothing I can do about it.

What is expected of them as students

All of the student informants believe that they are expected to excel in the classroom. It is also assumed that all students will pursue their college education. Min answered the question with the following statement:

> It's simple, we are expected to finish high school because it is assumed that we are all going to college. Thus, we are given the task to do one thing: be prepared to face challenges.

Barney further elaborated by saying:

> As students, we are expected to learn with minimal guidance. The teachers are there to introduce the lesson and after that, we are on our own. Students here learn at their own pace. The pace however, is dictated by how well a majority of the students understand the lesson. In most cases, the pace is very fast. So, most of the time when I feel like lagging behind, I seek the help of our teachers through consultation. They are all accommodating so I manage to be back on track in no time.

The school community

Hannah characterized the school community at Forest Knolls as "close knit." She stated:

> In this school, we are one big happy family. Population-wise, we are very few. In our classroom alone, there are only 15 students. So, you get to know everyone at a very intimate level. Although there are times when competitiveness gets the better of us, we are all comfortable with each other.

Furthermore, Stephen suggested that their families play an important role in the school community. He explained:

> Most of our parents know each other. We see the same faces in parties outside the school. Just the other night, my parents hosted a party and most of my classmates were there. So, we are all very comfortable with one another. Not only because we see each other in school 5 times in a week but also because we get to see each outside the confines of the classroom --which is fun because parties can be boring without your friends.

Min, on the other hand, commented that the school community at Forest Knolls is "competitive." She stated:

> Sure, we are all friends here but there's no denying that there is a tense competition among students. When it is time for our teachers to hand out the results of our examinations, everyone wants to be the "highest" in terms of grades. When a new topic is introduced, everyone wants to be the first to say, "I got it!" We are close knit, no doubt. But, watch out because there is only one motive, that is to outdo one another in terms of academic standing.

The respondents' perceptions on how education is different between the affluent and the economically deprived

Stephen believes that financial support is the most significant difference between the affluent and economically deprived students. He explained further by stating:

> In this day and age, without the proper financial support, it is difficult to finish your studies. I think that rich kids are lucky to have parents who can support their children's education. I'm sure that there are very intelligent poor students but

realistically speaking, without money, they cannot fulfill their dreams.

Min agreed with Stephen's point of view. She added:

> There is a great expectation from my parents for me to finish high school with flying colors because they want me to get accepted at the University of the Philippines, where they both graduated. As for the poor students, I think that most of their parents never finished high school; that is why there is no pressure for their children to get into college. The main difference between the rich and the poor is that rich kids pursue college education, poor children go straight to work.

Barney, on the other hand, believes that his education is different, based on the following assumption:

> From what I understand, teachers at public schools are not as qualified as our teachers here at Forest Knolls. I read in the newspapers about teachers who sell tupperware to their students because their salaries are not enough. If you study in a private school, I think teachers are more professional. Our teachers care about us, they do not try to make profit from us by selling some stuff in exchange for good grades.

Woodland Hills High School.

What the students learn in the classrooms

Kristen believes that their teachers do not teach them anything at Woodland Hills. She explained by saying:

> Honestly, I do not see any difference in terms of what I knew when I was a freshman and what I know now as a graduating student. It's embarrassing to admit but I still did not master the art of simple subtraction. Our teachers do not care if we understood the lesson or not. What is important is they finish the topic for the day and proceed to the next one right away. If you ask questions, you usually get a very vague answer --a proof that most of them do not know what they are talking about.

BJ, on the other hand, believes that they are not given the challenging lessons because of the perception that most poor students are intellectually inadequate. He stated:

> In this school, it is not important to learn complicated lessons because our teachers know that most of us will end up as waiters in the local Jollibee outlet anyway. What is important is we graduate because the minimum qualification to become a service crew [member] at Jollibee is a high school diploma. Our teachers are kind enough to let us all graduate no matter what because otherwise, we will just be bums in this city. We spent most of our time in that literature class staring at the window waiting for the bell to ring.

Robert believes that the curriculum at Woodland Hills is concentrated on the vocational skills training of the students. According to him, most of his teachers are unqualified to teach English and Math but when it comes to the skills training course, most of the teachers are very knowledgeable. He stated:

> The teachers who teach academic subjects are mostly "wannabes." They do not have a clue on what they need to impart to their students. However, I think that most of us appreciate the vocational skills training teachers because they are very skilled. In this course, I don't think you have to be intelligent to teach, what you have to have is skill. Most of my classmates enjoy carpentry while the girls in the classroom enjoy cooking and dressmaking. If you ask anybody right now about their favorite subject in school, I'm sure they will answer vocational education.

Tasha agrees with Robert by adding:

> I think that academically, we are all inferior in this school compared to the students from private high schools. But, we can beat them anytime when it comes to skills training. I think that our interests lie in this particular subject because of our economic conditions. We really don't need to learn trigonometry because we don't know how to apply those equations in real life. We find vocational training important because we are poor and we need to learn how to make money fast. During the summer I work part-time as a dressmaker in the city. I learned my skills in Miss Mendoza's home economics class. Now, that is what I call useful education.

What is expected of them as students

Tasha believes that the teachers and administrators at Woodland Hills do not really care about their students. She related a particular incident to stress her point:

> Recently, my best friend dropped out from school because she got pregnant. She is one of those regular students and apparently she is so regular that not one of our teachers bothered to find out why she never attended classes anymore. So, I guess nothing is really expected from us here at Woodland Hills. I guess the teachers do not have a deep sense of commitment to ensure that their students are successful in this school.

BJ believes that their teachers have set very low expectations from them, so that nothing much is expected of them as students. He agrees with Tasha that the majority of their teachers do not really care about them --which results in low academic expectations from them. He also stated:

> I guess I am expected not to comprehend anything. It's tough in the classroom because most of the students here at Woodland Hills are branded as rejects right from the very start by most of the teachers. We are expected to fail academically and are expected to drop out sooner or later.

Kristen bluntly stated "that students at Woodland Hills are expected to fail." She explained by stating:

> We are all in a land of make believe here. Teachers pretend to teach, students pretend to understand. All students are expected to be blue-collar workers as soon as they graduate anyway. So our teachers do not go out of their way to teach us very complex lessons. They assume that we can't comprehend anyway. In a way, I am thankful for their low expectations because I personally think it's just a waste of time. None of us will turn out to be engineers or doctors anyway. So why give undue pressure to a bunch of low achievers?

Robert, on the other hand, stated that there is little or no support at all from their parents which contributes to their failure as students. He explained by stating:

> Many parents believe that even if you graduate from high school, you will end up no better than the one who did not even step foot in school. My parents believe that if you are born poor, you will die poor. For them, school is just a waste of time. I am way older than most of the students here because I have been in and out of school due to my parents' insistence that I drop out and help them earn money right away. I still believe that I have a better chance of landing in a better

job if I have a high school diploma to present to my future employer.

The School Community

The students' understanding of the school's community provides a framework for determining the influences in the educational experiences of the students of Woodland Hills.

BJ characterized the school's community by saying, "it's a very big school, that I do not know even one-third of the students here. In our classroom alone, there are 63 students. It's difficult to memorize all the names." He further stated that:

> It's difficult to maintain a group of friends because I have to work at a local Chinese store right after classes. Then most of the ladies at school go home right after classes because they have to help their mothers with the household chores.

Tasha portrayed her school community as one where the "students feel alienated and do not have a sense of belonging." She suggested that to be successful in school, students must feel that they belong. They should feel connected and have good relationships with the adults of the school, including the surrounding neighborhoods.

Robert related that there are a lot of drug pushers who sell marijuana and shabu near the entrance gates of the campus. Hence his response when asked about the sense of community in the school, "you deal with a lot of students who are high on drugs when they are in school. It's better to mind your own business."

Kristen described the school community at Woodland Hills as "detached." She works as a live-in housemaid for one of the wealthy families in the city. As a matter of fact, one of her employers' children is a student at Forest Knolls High School. She

related:

> I often compare the relationships of students at Woodland Hills and Forest Knolls. I do not have close friends, simply because I do not have the luxury of time to hang out with my classmates after school. I need to go home and clean my employer's house. But, you should see the students at Forest Knolls. They often have sleep-over parties and their bonding is quite remarkable.

The respondents' perceptions on how education is different between the affluent and the economically deprived

All student informants recognize educational resources as the main difference between the education of the affluent and the poor. Tasha and Kristen identified the limited resources at Woodland Hills contribute greatly to their failure in school. Kristen stated:

> There is no way we can compete with students from the affluent schools. Simply because of the limited resources given to us. The administrators of the school cannot hire qualified teachers, we don't have enough books in the library and the school's physical structure is literally falling apart.

Robert added:

> Private schools are very well funded. They have facilities that are state-of-the-art. We always hear about the internet, but in this school, we don't even have a clear idea on how the internet works. We have computer laboratories here but only teachers are allowed to use them.

BJ believes that the level of education is dependent on your socioeconomic standing in life. He stated:

> If a student enrolls in one of the wealthy schools, they teach him how to become his own boss or prepare him to be a doctor, lawyer or any of those big shot professions. If a poor student is enrolled in a trashy high school, he is expected to become a janitor or a maid. So the main difference between the rich and the poor is their future job titles.

Specific Question No. 1(b): What factors do the students consider instrumental in their level of educational achievement?

This question was raised to analyze the different reasons that affect the students' learning abilities which further characterize their educational experiences. The level of educational achievement of the students from Forest Knolls and Woodland Hills was influenced by the following factors:

Teacher qualifications. All student informants believe that the teacher is the most important factor that affects their level of educational achievement.

Barney, a student from Forest Knolls contributed:

> No matter how intelligent a student is, he or she still needs the guidance of the teacher to achieve their greatest potential. I am a below average student when it comes to intelligence but with the help of the highly qualified teachers at Forest Knolls, I still manage to get good grades. I believe that with the proper motivation from the teachers, any student can survive this highly competitive environment at this school.

Min, also a student from the Forest Knolls believes that having qualified teachers affects the students' level of educational achievement. She stated:

> Most of the students at Forest Knolls are very intelligent. That is why it is important to have highly qualified and well-trained teachers. Otherwise, it would be a shame to have students who are more capable than their teachers. I am one of the students who makes sure that I read beyond what is required, so I would like to assume that all our teachers can answer any question under the sun I may have in mind. So far, only one teacher disappointed me during my entire stay at this school. Generally speaking, all of them are very good and highly qualified. I guess it's just right that they should all be qualified considering how much our parents are paying to send us to this school.

Stephen supported Min's beliefs and he also added:

> Having teachers who expect a lot from their student is very important. In this school, teachers expect us to do more than what is required of us. I think it is that expectation that makes students want to achieve more. Motivation is the key, and believe me, all teachers here know how to motivate their students.

On the other hand, Tasha, a student from Woodland Hills, blames her school's hiring policy for her inadequate educational experience. She stated:

> How can you be happy with your experience in this school when the first thing that comes into your mind when asked about Woodland Hills High is how inexperienced your teachers are? I have to be honest and say that all of my teachers since I was a freshman were all unfit to be called teachers. We are stuck with a bunch of rejects for teachers!

BJ agrees with Tasha on the problem of unqualified teachers at Woodland Hills. Moreover, he mentioned another problem related to his teachers, he stated:

> Some of our teachers do not really care if we learn something! Most of them are not interested in their students. They only care about their paychecks arriving on time. Sure, there are teachers who have motherly qualities. Nonetheless, it does not erase the fact that they are very unqualified to teach. I think if our teachers just go the extra mile and make us feel loved, the morale in this school will be higher.

Robert added that the students are not given the right to think for themselves. He contributed:

> Everyone at Woodland Hills feels inadequate. How can you develop a sense of self-worth when you know that your teachers think you are stupid? Although I can't blame the teachers for thinking so because I know that the majority of the students here are really dumb. Some of my classmates can't even spell the school's name! Thus, those who think that they are smart are stuck with us rejects.

Kristen believes that her level of educational achievement is not being met by her teachers. She said:

> Students are treated like preschoolers in this school. It's as if the teachers are afraid to challenge our minds. Maybe they feel it's a waste of time to do so

because we are poor anyway. They might think all poor people are dumb or something. I am not happy with what they teach me in this school because I know that I have the potential to do better. I just need a chance to prove my worth. But, our teachers do not have the proper training to motivate us to do better. I know for a fact that one of our teachers decided to apply for a teaching position in this school because she is just waiting for her papers as a domestic helper in Hongkong. That speaks well of the kind of teachers this school hires.

Socioeconomic status. Another factor considered influential in the level of educational achievement of the students from the two schools under study is their socioeconomic status.

BJ, from Woodland Hills, believes that being poor is the main reason why his level of educational achievement is low. He related how a typical school day goes:

> Being poor, we don't have the luxury of eating breakfast. I always go to school with a hungry stomach. I have to walk 4 kilometers because taking the tricycle is too expensive. Once, I almost fainted in front of the school gate because we did not have dinner the previous night. I have trouble concentrating inside the classroom because I am so weak from hunger. Much as I want to improve my grades, I simply do not have the resources to do so.

Tasha, also from the same school, believes that being poor prevents her from being the typical student. He stated:

> Much as I want to devote my time to my studies, I cannot simply do it. I have to work to help my mother support us. I get low grades because I don't have time to do my homework. Sometimes, I skip classes because I am needed at work. If I weigh what is more important, I always end up choosing work over school because I get paid if I work. So, unlike those rich kids who have all the time to study, a poor student's life is much more complicated.

Hannah is the only student from Forest Knolls who mentioned socioeconomics as an important factor for her level of educational achievement. She explained by stating:

> Sometimes I feel that wealthy children often neglect the perks of being rich. My parents bought me a computer so I use the internet for my homework. I even have a private tutor to help me. I guess, if you can afford to give your child the best the world has to offer, then you are opening a lot of opportunities for your child to

achieve better.

School Facilities. The student informants suggested that the quality of the school facilities affect their educational achievement.

Robert, from Woodland Hills, complained about the lack of school facilities in his school. He elaborated further by stating:

> You should see our library. It is not a conducive place for learning. Most of the books there are old. The tables and chairs are vandalized if not destroyed. I only live in a small makeshift house with 7 family members to share it with. We don't have electricity in our shack which is why I go to the library to do my homework. But, how can I be inspired to study with that kind of hole? The restrooms in this school should also be replaced. You can smell the stink a kilometer away. In fact, I pity those classrooms on the floor where the restrooms are located. Students can barely concentrate because of the odor coming out from the restrooms. There is no running water in those toilets.

Min, from Forest Knolls, acknowledges her school's state-of-the-art facilities as a major factor for her positive educational experience. She stated:

> It's so much fun to be in a school where you are given the best facilities to help you study better. The library has the most comfortable chairs you can imagine! My friends and I frequent the library because they have the best magazine selection and there is even a snack place inside, just like Starbucks!

Stephen credits the school's modern athletic facilities for the basketball scholarship he got from dela Salle University. He related:

> Forest Knolls has a gym with several basketball courts. It is where I harnessed my athletic talents. I was surprised to get a scholarship grant from one of the best universities in the country. I guess it pays to have modern facilities at your fingertips. You feel motivated to play because it's too wonderful a facility to pass up.

Class Size. Another factor that plays an important role in the level of educational achievement according to the student informants is class size.

Barney, from Forest Knolls, credits the small class size in his school for his positive

educational experiences. He explained:

> With only 12 students in our class, every teacher can devote quality time to his or her student. I consider all my classmates as good friends. It helps to have a small class size. You tend to adjust to each other's attitudes pretty easily. Besides, you get the full attention you deserve.

Barney's observation is a complete contradiction of Kristen's experiences at Woodland Hills. She said:

> There are about 62 students in my class. A lot of my classmates play truant because our teachers don't notice anyway.

Specific Research Question No. 1(c): What are the perceptions about the influence of financial disparity when they enter college?

This question was raised to examine how family income impacts the chances of a high school graduate attending and completing a college or university degree. In this particular study, a family's financial resources greatly influenced the perceptions of the students.

Kristen, a student from Woodland Hills explained her perceptions on the influence of money and entering college. She said:

> I don't think I will pursue tertiary education even if my grades and NSAT scores are quite high. Although I can get scholarships from various NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), I don't think my family can support my everyday expenses. Case in point; my older brother got a scholarship from Ateneo de Manila University, probably the best institution in the country today. He was only able to stay there for a year because my parents cannot support his cost of living expenses such as boarding house rentals, tricycle fares and food. They even ended up borrowing money from our neighbors and up until now, they are paying them on an installment basis. Honestly speaking, I believe I am intelligent enough to go to college just like my "kuya" (older brother). I know that not all wealthy people have the brains to survive college. Yet, I also believe that money can buy you

anything, even a college diploma.

Tasha is another student from Woodland Hills who shares the perceptions of Kristen. She stated:

> Although I want to go to college, I don't think I can, considering the financial standing of my parents. At the moment, I am working part-time to help support my little brother. My mother is just a housemaid and whatever she earns is just enough to buy my little brother's formula and other baby needs. My father has been jobless since I was a freshman. It would be useless for me to wish for a college diploma. Wealthy people are very lucky. They can afford to send their children to the best schools and even have spare money to buy them a car and the trendiest clothes. As for the poor like me, I can only dream of what for them is reality.

Barney, a student from Forest Knolls believes that:

> I think that in this school, it is not a question of 'are you going to college after graduation?' It is more of a question of where you intend to pursue your tertiary education. I don't know anyone from Forest Knolls who has no intention of pursuing college. I think it is absurd to even consider not attending college! I think it's a whole new different story for the poor students. I mean, their parents never attended college, why should they bother?

Min is another student from Forest Knolls who believes that parental influence is as powerful as financial ability. She stated:

> My parents invested in the College Assurance Plan (CAP) even before I was born. They told me that my college had been paid for before I turned one year old. It is important for our family to have a degree. I come from a family of doctors, from my grandparents to my parents. It's a family tradition to join the medical profession. I don't think poor students can afford medical school. Their parents can't even afford to send them to good secondary schools. And you expect them to finish college? Unless they get a scholarship or they are really exceptionally intelligent, only then will they have a college degree, in my own opinion.

Specific Question No. 2: What is the relationship between the academic achievement of the students and their class status?

This question was raised to examine the impact of the student informants' perceived differences and similarities, in terms of their educational experiences, with their level of academic achievement.

Forest Knolls High School

As Barney stated earlier, the students at Forest Knolls are expected to learn with minimal guidance. He believes that having the independence to think has a positive influence in his overall academic standing. He stated:

> All students want to have good grades. Since our teachers expect us to study hard, I am compelled to devote most of my free time to the library. I think I can control my future when it comes to my academic standing. It's just a matter of self-discipline.

Likewise, Hannah cited her teachers' positive and high expectations as a major contributor to her good academic standing. She stated:

> We are expected to think independently and develop our own conclusion about the subject matter presented to us. I feel that gives us the opportunity to actively engage in the learning process, thus further enriching our knowledge.

Stephen agrees with Hannah's insight and he added the following statement:

> I consider my teachers here as role models. In fact, most of them have motherly and fatherly qualities, so I consider them as my parents. With that kind of relationship, you are inspired to study hard so as not to let your mentors down.

Hannah also noted her school's curriculum as a major influence in her academic

achievement. She expressed her beliefs below:

> As I have stated earlier, the curriculum here at Forest Knolls is centered on college or university preparation. That is why I try to study hard to at least ensure that I can get to the good colleges or universities here in the Philippines just like my older brother. With an impressive high school report card, I think that is not far-fetched.

Min believes that the competitive atmosphere contributes to her level of achievement. She declared:

> In a school where you want to outdo one another, you have no choice but to study reallly hard. I think it's the cut-throat atmosphere here that makes me want to excel in my studies.

However, the students did not believe that their academic standing is affected by their perceptions of how education is different between the affluent and the economically deprived.

Stephen stated:

> I don't really know if the fact that I study in a school for the rich affects my academic achievement. I know that there are poor students out there but I don't really find myself motivated to study harder because of the fact that they exist. I want to study hard because we are expected to do so. Not because I know that I am lucky to be at this school.

Woodland Hills High School

Students at Woodland Hills believe that they are not being trained to become intellectually capable to hold major work positions in the future. Instead, they are expected to become blue-collar workers. Tasha believes that it is useless to study hard because nothing much is expected from them anyway.

BJ also commented:

> I do not really care if I do not know anything because in the end, all of us will graduate from this place, anyway. It's really useless to study very hard because poor students can only land in jobs that rich and educated people won't even think of doing. If you are rich, you won't clean the toilets of offices. That kind of job is reserved for the poor, the dumb and the useless.

Robert further discusses how being poor affects their academic achievement. He commented:

> If asked what I learned in this school, I would say, 'not much.' Just enough knowledge to get by in life. I do not find the need to study really hard because I feel that it would be useless. We are only expected to excel in the skills training program because it is where our teachers feel that we can benefit the most. As one of our teachers bluntly put it, "no need for you to master creative writing, all you need is your hands so you can do carpentry." I got hurt the first time I heard that comment but, come to think of it, he is right. I know I can never be a journalist but I know for sure that I can be a minimum wage earner.

Kristen believes that having unqualified teachers greatly affects her academic achievement. She stated:

> I feel that the teachers here lack a sense of commitment to help their students. I, for one, am not motivated to study because it is quite obvious that most of our teachers are not qualified to teach. They expect us to become useless citizens, or at least that is how they make us feel all the time. It's really frustrating so I do not really go out of my way to impress them. I am contented with the status quo.

Tasha agrees with Kristen's beliefs and added:

> What really hurts me as a student is the fact that our teachers teach us less than what we deserve. I think that being poor, we just have to accept the fact that our teachers do not really care how we do academically. All that matters is they get their salaries on time. Being poor, we have the disadvantage of having less to begin with in terms of knowledge. What makes it worse is the fact that we are not given the chance to know more.

Consistent with Tasha and Kristen's observation, BJ concluded:

> Being poor we are placed in lower track and lower achievement courses which are

> often taught by the least qualified teachers. Our academic achievement is miserably low because we know it is what is expected of us.

According to Tasha, she has no close friends at school. She believes that having no friends makes it easy for her to drop out of school because no one will miss her anyway. She further commented:

> I think friends are good motivators to study hard. I think the students at this school are too preoccupied with a lot of other things. So, no friends and a lot of problems equal poor performance in school.

The students were aware that their education is very different from that of the affluent students. They were united in saying that if they were rich, they would definitely have better academic standing. Kristin commented:

> When you're rich, everything is better. Your life is better so I guess your grades will be better too. The rich don't have to worry about what to eat, so they have a lot of time to study hard and become successful.

The earlier section of this chapter presented the data from the interviews conducted by the researcher with the 8 student informants. The following section reports the findings from the classroom observations of the researcher.

Classroom observations

Forest Knolls School.

The classrooms at Forest Knolls are fully air-conditioned and well-lit. I conducted classroom observations in this school for four months. Ms. Cua's class had 15 students, 8 of which were male, while 7 were female. Throughout the course of these observations,

the students of Ms. Cua's literature class finished reading 4 novels, namely: "Lord of the Flies", "Pride and Prejudice", "The Catcher in the Rye" and "King Lear."

Over the course of these readings, the students were required to write reaction papers that were due every meeting. Also, a long test was scheduled for every first Friday of the month. Moreover, they were also required to write all the unfamiliar words used in the novels on a piece of paper. This, according to Ms. Cua, will help build the vocabulary of her students. It is worth noting that she did not ask them to look up the meanings of these words. Ms. Cua said, "I trust my students are responsible enough to find out the meanings of these words without me asking them to do it."

After finishing each novel, Ms. Cua required her students to write a 10-page paper regarding the various writing styles employed by the author. They were also expected to critique the novel.

I observed that most of the students were pressured in Ms. Cua's class. A student (not one of the student informants) approached me to comment on the paper she wrote on "The Catcher in the Rye." Barney was particularly uneasy on the day Ms. Cua scheduled a long test. He was not sure he could recall every single character, since Ms. Cua warned them beforehand that the long test would cover all four novels, "from cover to cover." He said, "I love reading books, but these books are not really my cup of tea, except maybe for

the 'Catcher in the Rye'. I don't think I will do well in this long test. It is so hard to read one novel, let alone four! It is too much work." Hannah agreed with Barney that reading four novels was strenuous. She stated, "sometimes, I want to remind Ms. Cua that we have other classes to worry about. But, I'm afraid she might think I can't handle her class."

Furthermore, according to Stephen, Ms. Cua has a habit of "forcing" students to recite. She often calls out a student's name before she poses a question related to the topic. If a student fails to answer a particular question, she throws one question after the other until the student finally utters the correct answer. Stephen volunteers:

> You should always make sure that you read the chapters assigned by Ms. Cua. Otherwise, you are in deep trouble. Nothing is more embarrassing in this class than being asked a question and not knowing the answer. She will never let you sit down until you get the answer right.

All student informants believe that Ms. Cua's class is very demanding. However, not all of them think that Ms. Cua is giving them undue pressure. Min thinks that reading all four novels is "fun." She said "it's not too hard if you focus on the stories." She further explained that most of her classmates think that the novels are not interesting simply because they regard them as school work. According to Min, "the secret is to enjoy the books."

The pacing of instruction was fast-paced. Ms. Cua said that she "assumes" her

students have read the chapters ahead of time, thus, she often required her students to answer her questions regarding the novels without the benefit of a summary of the chapter being discussed. Almost always, the first forty five minutes of the class was devoted to discussion while the remaining fifteen minutes were devoted to essay writing, quizzes and other paper work. There were several times when Ms. Cua asked the students to play various characters impromptu. Her high expectations from her students and her strict countenance contributed to her being branded as a "terror" teacher at Forest Knolls.

I also observed Ms. Tuvera's *Sibika* (Philippine Social Studies) class for four months. A distinct characteristic of Philippine education is that English is used as the medium of instruction in most schools. There are only two subjects wherein the Filipino language is used, *Sibika* and *Filipino.*

It is evident that the students in Ms. Tuvera's class were not very fluent in the Filipino language. This is not surprising because these students speak English more than the average Filipino.

During the time of the observation, the uprising against the Estrada administration was taking place. Ms. Tuvera devoted most of the class hours to class interaction. She explained, "*Sibika* is about the Philippine government, the Filipinos and our way of life. I

feel that I should depart from any textbook lessons at this point because history is about to take place."

Indeed, there were some very interesting exchanges of ideas on what has been referred to as "People Power 2." As a brief background, the first "People Power" happened in 1986 when the Filipinos ended President Marcos' 20-year dictatorial regime through a bloodless coup d'etat. The second "People Power" happened right after a majority of the senators voted against the revelation of an important document that could implicate President Estrada on charges of plunder.

Ms. Tuvera obtained several videotape copies of the Estrada trials leading to the upheaval. Every meeting, they analyzed the senators' line of questioning as well as the answers of the witnesses. At one point, Ms. Tuvera arranged a debate among the students. It is worth noting that the students were "assigned" where to stand on the issue: "Is the president guilty." According to Ms. Tuvera, assigning a stand (which could be totally the opposite of the beliefs of the student) on the issue would help develop the reasoning abilities of her students. She further claimed that,

> It is easy to defend something you believe in. These students deserve a more challenging debate. That is why I opted to assign to them the side they should defend. That way, I can hopefully help them open their minds to the pros and cons of the controversial topic.

Compared to Ms. Cua's literature class, the students of Ms. Tuvera's class were more

relaxed. Ms. Tuvera's good sense of humor made the classroom atmosphere very light. Barney considered *sibika* to be his favorite subject because "Ms. Tuvera is the best teacher in the world. I like her jokes and she makes us all feel special." It was also worth noting that Ms. Cua preferred to address her students as Miss or Mr. followed by the family name while Ms. Tuvera addressed her students on a first name basis.

According to Ms. Tuvera, *sibika* is a boring subject which deals with mostly facts about the Philippines and its people. To make the subject more interesting for her students, she scheduled several field trips.

Summary

During the duration of my classroom observation, the students of Ms. Cua's literature class read four novels. In addition to the study of literature, the students were also required to write reaction papers and essays for each of the four novels. The students were expected by Ms. Cua to "demonstrate competence in various writing styles as well as show analytical thinking in their writing."

Ms. Cua believes that her students should be prepared to meet the challenges of college life. She is happy with the writing style of most of her students which she describes as "scholarly and academic."

Ms. Tuvera's *sibika* class had a more relaxed atmosphere. Students were

encouraged to openly discuss their opinions, without any restrictions. She did not mind the foul language used by some of her students in the heat of one discussion. She defended her nonchalant attitude by stating, "if a student is passionate about his stand on a particular issue, let him feel that way, as long as he does not offend his fellow classmates."

Furthermore, Ms. Tuvera believed that *sibika* is not a very interesting subject. She scheduled several field trips because she contended that it is a very effective educational tool for her. She also believed that it is her duty to "expose" her students to the real world. In her own words, "these students are our future leaders, let them know the ins and outs of the government as early as possible."

Both Ms. Cua and Ms. Tuvera were very strict about student attendance. Both informed me about their policy of informing the parents of students who constantly play truant.

Woodland Hills. I spent less time observing the classes at Woodland Hills primarily because there were numerous days when the teachers dismissed their students early.

For Mr. Carpio's literature class, the students were not required to read novels. He devoted his lessons to short stories by Filipino authors because he wanted his students to relate to the characters. He believed that his students' attention span is very short, thus, he avoided novels.

No essays were required from his students. However, Mr. Carpio scheduled short quizzes every Friday. I noticed that during Fridays, the number of students diminished significantly. When asked why the students seem not to care about taking the quizzes, Mr. Carpio quipped:

> Most of these students worry about a lot of things. Apparently, most of them do not worry how these quizzes affect their overall class standing. Of course it's frustrating, but it's been a habit of the students in this school not to care about anything. Sure, you want them to change but you know, it's hard to teach old dogs new tricks.

The literature class was devoid of any intellectual exchanges among the students and the teacher. Students were randomly selected to read a paragraph or two aloud for the first half of the class. The second half of the hour was devoted to silent reading by the students. During the silent reading time, I observed that only a few of the students were actually reading. Many of them just chatted while some went in and out the of classroom. Mr. Carpio, on the other hand, kept himself busy by dedicating the second half of the period to correcting papers and reading newspapers.

I also observed the *sibika* class of Ms. Fabia at Woodland Hills. The class was a complete contradiction of Mr. Carpio's literature class. The students were lively and there was a lot of interaction between the students and Ms. Fabia. When asked how she keeps the interest of her students, she answered:

> The fact that we use the Filipino language in this class is a big factor, I think. The

students are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings better. They have a hard time coping with other classes because they cannot speak straight English.

President Estrada's plunder trial was going on at the time when I observed Ms. Fabia's class. The students were passionate about the trial of Mr. Estrada and one student even branded the trial as "anti-poor." President Estrada's campaign slogan during his presidential bid was "Erap para sa mahirap" (Erap is for the poor). Most of the students believe that the wealthy want Estrada ousted because he is unworthy just because he is pro-poor. There were a lot of interesting debates among the students in the class. At one point, a student defended an "anti-Estrada" senator and several students booed her. As a result, the student stormed out of the classroom. I noticed that the particular student never attended Ms. Fabia's class after that incident.

Ms. Fabia was fond of giving "surprise quizzes." She believed that it is best for her not to announce the dates of quizzes because based on her experience, the students tend to play truant during quizzes. During these surprise quizzes, I observed that cheating is rampant. Since I was seated at the back of the room, I had a good view of how cheating was conducted by the students. Some students even went as far as opening their notebooks to find the answers.

Summary

The students at Woodland Hills were not required to write any essays or term

papers during the course of my observation. Furthermore, they were usually given multiple choice type quizzes and examinations. The teachers did not expect much from their students, as evidenced by Ms. Fabia's statement:

> My students are not really the best when in comes to intelligence. I have to adjust to their level. Multiple choice type questions are the best for their level. Don't even get me started with how they do at essays. It's miserable!

Moreover, Mr. Carpio's class lacked discussion. Tasha commented:

> I don't know how a literature class should be conducted. But, I definitely know that this is not how it is supposed to be. We should change the subject title to reading instead of literature. I don't have to attend this class, you know. I can just stay home and read the stories myself. Mr. Carpio should not be called a teacher, he doesn't teach!

It was also evident that many students did not show respect to their teachers. There were several students who intentionally ignored instructions by the teachers. Moreover, a lot of them were flagrant cheaters.

In classroom discussions, the students frequently blamed the wealthy for their miserable conditions in life. Often, they become so passionate with their convictions that they lost focus of the subject matter being discussed.

Both teachers did not call their students on a first name basis, except for a few exceptions. When they wanted a particular student to recite, they would point to the student. When I asked why this was the case, Mr. Carpio explained, "I have a lot of students in my class, it is impossible to memorize all their names. Sorry."

Aside from the personal interviews and classroom observations, I also collected documents from the teachers of the two schools. The next section provides a brief description of the process.

Collection of Documents

The teachers provided me with several worksheets, homework and test papers. These documents helped me establish the relationship and interaction between the teacher and the students.

The documents provided by Ms. Cua and Ms. Tuvera from Forest Knolls were mostly essays that required in-depth thought. On the contrary, the students at Woodland Hills were given mostly multiple choice questionnaires. It was also noted that one activity provided by Mr. Carpio required his students to draw and color one of the main characters of the "Summer Solstice" by Nick Joaquin.

Overview

Chapter 5 presented the factors influencing the educational experiences of the affluent and the economically deprived students.

The findings of the study were obtained through personal interviews, classroom observation, and document collection. The personal interview consisted of specific questions targeted to address the differences and similarities of the respondents'

understanding of their educational experiences. I focused on the following components: What the students learn in the classroom, what is expected of them as students, the school community, and the respondents' perceptions of how education is different between the affluent and the economically deprived.

Based on the responses of the student informants about the differences and similarties of the educational experience, I also addressed how these understandings affected the academic achievement of the respondents.

Moreover, students were also asked to enumerate the factors they consider instrumental in their academic achievement in school. This question was raised to help me analyze the varied reasons that affect the students' learning abilities. Since the student informants belonged to two different social classes, a question was also raised to examine how family income impacts the chances of a student in completing a college or a university degree.

Classroom observations and document collection were also conducted to enable me to fully comprehend the educational experiences of the student informants. Furthermore, the classroom observations and document collection helped me establish the relationship and interaction between the teachers and the students.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter examines the findings of the research in relation to previous studies involving the difference between the educational experiences of the economically deprived and affluent students. Since the purpose of this study was to understand the educational experiences of the student informants, I examined the findings with those from various other related studies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the class status of the students and their educational experiences.

Furthermore, the study was conducted to help educators understand the different influences that affect the educational experience of the students.

General research question

How do groups of economically deprived and affluent senior high school students define their respective educational experience?

Specific question no. 1 (a)

What are the differences and similarities in their understanding of their

educational experience?

At Forest Knolls High School, the informants understood that the nature of teaching and learning in their school was based on college preparation. They also believed that the teacher was there to guide them through their lessons in such a way that they were still given the freedom to discover their own potential. For students at Woodland High, they believed that their teachers did not challenge their academic abilities but instead, they were being prepared (or doomed?) to become blue-collar workers upon graduation. It was established by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in one of their early studies that the inequalities within society are sustained primarily due to the integration of the youth into the economic system. They contend that students are attuned to a set of social relations within the economic structure of capitalism. Thus, educational institutions sustain this economic structure by preparing their students to take a particular role in society.

The students at Forest Knolls were not just expected to attend college or university but good colleges or universities. Moreover, as students they were expected to learn with minimal guidance from their teachers. On the other hand, the students at Woodland High believed that their teachers and parents have set very low expectations. Teachers believed that if students improve at a minimal level, they are already successful. These expectations are supported by Nieto's (1996) deficit theory wherein he argued that

some people are intellectually deficient due to genetic inferiority, cultural deprivation or racial background. The findings of the current study also support the self-fulfilling prophecy found in the study of Ugbor (1991) where it is believed that educators are agents that perform the ideological functions for the dominant classes. The teachers have set a stereotype of a "good" student based on social class. Furthermore, the current findings support the reproduction of classes theory discussed by Howard (1998). According to the theory, structures such as the instructional methods, daily routines and curricula serve in a functional capacity to culturally transmit and renew the dominant ideology.

As for the sense of community in Forest Knolls, it was aptly described by one of the students as "close knit." Although competition was evident, the students were nonetheless united in saying that they were proud of their school. Conversely, the students at Woodland High felt that there was no sense of belonging in their school. Thus, it was obvious that there was a lack of unity among the students. Most students were even ashamed to be associated with the school. The role of the community at each school provided for the educational experiences of the students. The community at Forest Knolls has a common purpose of meeting the educational needs of the students. The unity within the community shapes the academic success of the students in the school. As for the students at Woodland Hills, the division among the students and teachers contributed to

the loss of community. Thus, students did not have a good community relationship that affected their education. The lack of unity directed the students toward failure because academic success cannot be reached. These findings support Friere's (1989) argument that without a common voice, the oppressed status prevents their individual voices from being heard. If the oppressed want to be heard, they should have a unified voice to establish their own identity. Otherwise, an identity will be forced on them by the dominant culture.

The differences in the understanding of the educational experiences of the affluent and the economically deprived were dissimilar except for the final component -- the educational discrepancies as perceived by the students of both economic standings. They all believed that public schools did not have the resources of the private ones, thus putting the students of the former at a disadvantage. Furthermore, they also believed that having the financial capability was a major factor in determining who goes to college after graduation. Casserly and Garrett's (1977) research identified there is a gross discrepancy in the educational opportunities between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, they also contended that the poor do not get a fair share of the opportunities because resources for education are limited.

Specific question No. 1 (b)

What factors do the students consider instrumental in their level of educational achievement?

The students enumerated several factors influencing their level of educational achievement. However, four major factors were repeatedly stated by the students from both schools. These dominant factors were teachers, socioeconomic status, school facilities and class size.

Teachers

All student informants in the study believed that having a qualified teacher in the classroom was the single most important factor in improving student achievement. This was evidenced by Ferguson (2001) who concluded that teacher experience accounts for 40 percent of the variance in student achievement.

According to a Philippine investigative television program, *Correspondents* (aired on June 4, 2001), a common problem of public schools in the Philippines was the lack of qualified teachers. Some schools chose to hire uncredentialed or minimally qualified teachers to save money and pay less in salaries. A common problem of schools with heavy concentrations of poor children was that they are more likely to have inexperienced and uncertified teachers, as evidenced from an article in the California

Educator (2001). The observation of the student informants from Woodland Hills confirmed that their teachers often do not know the subjects they are supposed to teach. They talked about teachers who consistently underestimate their potential.

Furthermore, the students felt that their teachers' expectations for them were miserably low-level. Among the documents I have collected, I was stunned to see that senior high school students were given a coloring assignment as a major examination. The economically disadvantaged students were given As for work that would earn a C or D in an affluent school. Rees (2001) observed that poor students are classified as ones who cannot be expected to perform at the same level as those in more affluent schools. Therefore, the bar is lowered, incompetent teachers are retained and students are socially promoted even when they have not mastered basic skills. Haycock (2001) pointed out that numerous education critics have argued that poor students are disproportionately placed in lower track and lower achievement courses in schools, which, these critics further claim, are often taught by the least qualified teachers.

In the Philippine setting, it is obvious why all the qualified teachers opt to teach in private schools. It is common knowledge that they are paid better than their counterparts from the public schools. As the principal of Forest Knolls pointed out, they pay their teachers at least 200% more than the teachers from the public schools. This is due to the

fact that teachers from the private schools are more qualified, most of whom have completed their master's degrees. Teachers from Woodland Hills have mostly baccalaureate degrees which were not even relevant to the subjects they teach. One teacher informed me that she decided to teach at Woodland Hills because she was not accepted as a domestic helper in Singapore. Teachers with the most advanced degrees, the most classroom experience, and the highest level of education are far more likely to teach in affluent schools than in public ones. In addition, affluent schools can provide their teachers with greater opportunities to develop and improve their professional skills than in high-poverty schools.

Socioeconomic status

In the past, Herrnstein and Murray (1991) proposed that low intelligence lies at the root of society's social ills. They argued that poor children have lower levels of intelligence and achieve academically at lower levels than affluent students. A decade ago, people might have believed that what students learned was largely a factor of their family income or parental education, not of what schools did. But recent research (Haycock, 2001; Adelman, 1998; Ferguson, 1998) has proved otherwise. What schools do matters enormously, and what matters most is good teaching. Beyond the educational policies and practices which contribute to the achievement gap between the disadvantaged and the

affluent, there are also a number of socioeconomic factors related to the attitudes and behaviors of students.

Chubb and Moe's (1990) study identified that the strongest and most consistent finding in research on student achievement is that family background is a major influence, perhaps even a decisive one. Children who grew up in more affluent or highly educated families enjoy advantages that begin at birth with a more intellectually stimulating environment. They go on to attend better schools, enjoy more cultural opportunities and travel more widely. Their parents also have the educational background and resources to help them along the way and to expose them to a culture of high expectations and high achievement.

Coleman's (1966) much-publicized report concluded that differences between schools in regard to the resources allocated to them account for only a small part of the inequality. What students bring from their homes and not what students bring home from school is what contributes to their academic achievment. Thus, students with well-educated and affluent parents are most likely to become successful in schools. Similarly, Goodlad (1984) concluded that there is curricular imbalances between some schools. There are topics in the classrooms are taught traditionally for the teachers see no reason for change. Some topics are suppose to cater to affluent students going to college. On

the other hand, some teachers teach because they think that society expects them and the circumstances of schooling suggest the need for them.

Moreover, students from the poor communities are more likely to be exposed to safety and health risks and are less likely to receive regular medical care. They are the ones most likely to live with only one parent, and their parents tend to be less educated.

Students living in poverty face significant barriers to an equitable education. One of the hardest to overcome was the perception by their teachers that these students were less capable than their middle-class or affluent counterparts. A typical poor Filipino student is one who wears hand-me-down clothing, is a constant absentee because he is often asked to do household chores, or simply because of his family's lack of money, and goes to school with an empty stomach. Unfortunately, some educators view these as signals that the child places no value on education.

School Facilities

In the course of the classroom observations and campus visits, I had noticed that private schools have far better educational facilities than the public schools. It is clear that public schools with deteriorating facilities and lack of learning tools or materials are at a significant disadvantage. At Woodland Hills, only one computer laboratory exists as opposed to Forest Knolls which has 12 computer laboratories to cater to their students. It

was also observed that almost half of the computers at Woodland Hills are not functioning properly. They lack conduits for computer related cables, electrical wiring for computers and other communications technology. In addition, their computers are old and they are incapable of using the software packages and new hardware developed over the past five to ten years. These facts are grim reminders of the inequities in student access to the use of this important technology to make Filipino students ready for the information age. Technology could help the economically disadvantaged students overcome barriers associated with their socioeconomic status. However, without the necessary infrastructure, the students cannot realize the true potential of technology.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the majority of the facilities of public schools are not on par with that of the facilities of the private institutions. These include library facilities, medical clinics and guidance and counseling programs.

The need for modernization and new construction of school facilities has become critical to the success of the students in schools. Philippine educators are faced with enormous challenges of record high enrollments, new demands for education technology and the hazards of deteriorating facilities.

Class Size

Mr. Carpio of Woodland Hills had 63 students in one classroom. He

admitted that he barely has time to go through all the assignments and quizzes of his students. Furthermore, he only knows half of his students by name. To use his own words, the rest are just "faceless children".

On the other hand, the students at Forest Knolls are thankful for the small class size policy of their school. They credit this policy for their good academic performance. The teachers at Forest Knolls can attend to the individual needs of their students.

In a study conducted by Rotherham (1999), he concluded that smaller, more autonomous, flexible and accountable schools should characterize education in the next century. Moreover, the research conducted by Cotton (1996) argued that large schools not only hurt poor students but actually increase the educational gap between the wealthy and poor children.

Specific question no. 1 (c)

What are their perceptions about the influence of financial disparity when they enter college?

Based on the interviews conducted in this study, it is obvious that the family's financial resources greatly influence a student's choice to a college or university. Unfortunately, it shows that poor students are far less likely to attend and graduate from college, in spite of the scholarship programs that are available to aid them. Also,

affluent parents are more likely to save and prepare for the cost of higher education for their children than families with lower incomes. Another important factor to consider in the disparity is the fact that students from affluent families have parents who earned college or university degrees while most of the parents of children from the lower socioeconomic sector do not hold degrees.

In a study conducted by the National Student Loan Program (NSLP) in 2001, they concluded that the student's socioeconomic status is a much more powerful determinant of college attendance than academic achievement. In other words, a wealthy student who performs well is more likely to attend college than a poor student who performs equally well; and a wealthy student who performs poorly is just as likely to attend college as a meritorious student from a poor family.

Specific research question no. 2

How do these understandings affect the academic achievement of the students?

For the students at Forest Knolls, the teachers play an important role for their academic success. The high academic expectations of their teachers contribute to their positive learning experience. Furthermore, the students consider their teachers as their role models. Another great influence for the students' academic achievement at Forest

Knolls is the school's curriculum. Students and teachers believe that their curriculum is based on college or university preparation. Competition is also an important factor for the level of achievement students have at Forest Knolls.

On the other hand, the students at Woodland Hills believe that the root of the problem lies in the fact that they have unqualified teachers. Some of them believe that they can do better academically, if not for their teachers' inexperience and low expectations. As a result, the students believe that they will end up in low paying jobs due to their miserable academic experience.

The findings of this study reflect the earlier research of Herrnstein and Murray (1994) where they proposed that low intelligence lies at the root of society's social ills. They contend that poor students have lower levels of intelligence and therefore achieve academically at lower levels than the affluent students. The way the teachers treat their students in their respective schools shows that they understand the issue of academic achievement as a result of inherited aptitude. In a way, they regard the less intelligent to have subordinate status and therefore not to achieve at the same level as those with higher cognitive abilities.

Also, the students at Forest Knolls believe that the high expectations from their parents is a good motivator for doing well in school. On the contrary, Robert, from

Woodland Hills, blames his parents' lack of education for his poor academic standing. This difference between the affluent and the poor is supported by the study of Rothstein (1998) wherein he stated that the most important factor in academic achievement is family income. In a more recent study conducted by Schwartz (1999), he indicated that the strongest correlation that exists with future success is family income.

Overview

An analysis of the interview data provided insights into the different research questions that underpinned this study. Informants who belonged to the same social class described their educational experiences in the same way.

Affluent students understand that the nature of teaching and learning in the school is based on college preparation. On the other hand, the economically deprived students believed that they were being prepared to become blue-collar workers after graduation.

The differences in the understandings of the educational experiences of the affluent and the economically deprived were dissimilar except for their perception that there is a gross discrepancy in the educational opportunities between the rich and the poor. Also, teachers played an important role in the educational experiences of the student informants in the study. The affluent students credit their teachers for their positive learning experience while the economically deprived blamed their unqualified teachers for their

miserable conditions in school.

The students considered four dominant factors that influenced their level of educational achievement. These factors were teachers, socioeconomic status, school facilities and class size.

Furthermore, the study confirmed that the family's financial resources greatly influence a student's ability to attend a college or university.

Chapter 7

OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will present the overview of the study, a summary of the findings, and conclusions of the study. Recommendations and personal reflections about the findings will also be discussed.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the differences in the educational experiences of two social classes -- the affluent and the economically deprived. This study demonstrated the contradictory educational experiences of the students from both social classes. As well, the factors that influence the level of academic achievement were explored. This study also identified how the affluent and economically deprived perceive the influence of financial disparity upon entering college or university.

This study was conducted from October 2000 to March 2001 during the third quarter of the school year. I made use of several qualitative research methods such as personal interviews, classroom observations and document collection to identify the varied educational experiences of the affluent and economically deprived students. Two sets of interview questions were prepared, one for the teachers and another for the students (Appendices A and B) to guide the researcher in the study. The interviews with four

student informants and two teacher informants from each school were the primary source of data for this particular research. Also, I conducted classroom observations for four months which helped me establish a level of familiarity with the students and teachers. As well, documents were collected which provided me with valuable information regarding the interactions between the students and their teachers.

I reviewed several studies supporting the relationship between class status and academic achievement. The most consistent finding of these studies is that students from affluent families do better academically than their economically deprived counterparts.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are derived:

1. The affluent students are not only expected to pursue tertiary education but it is assumed they will attend excellent colleges or universities as well.

2. The economically deprived students were expected to join the work force after their high school graduation.

3. The affluent students were expected by their teachers to learn with minimal guidance.

4. The economically deprived were given very low-level academic course work.

5. The community in the affluent school is very close-knit and yet competitive.

6. The economically deprived students lack identity and unity. Also, most of the students do not want to be associated with the school.

7. All student informants believe that the differences in educational resources create differences in educational opportunities.

8. Teacher qualification is one of the four most important factor that affects the level of educational achievement. Other significant factors include socio-economic status, school facilities and class size.

9. Family income and socio-economic status is a more powerful determinant of college attendance than academic achievement.

10. The students at the two schools were prepared for different roles in society.

Recommendations

The findings of the study revealed the problems underlying the secondary educational system of the Philippines. The affluent students of Forest Knolls were content with their educational experiences, while the poor students of Woodland Hills encountered the following problems: minimal teacher qualification, low socioeconomic status, poor school facilities and large class size.

I opted to focus and recommend solutions on the problems of the public school since it is obvious that the private school under study has a well-established system.

The following are the recommendations for this study:

1. The first priority of the Secretary of the Department of Education should be teacher qualifications and recruitment.

Since it is in the public schools where unqualified teachers abound, the government should find ways to attract competent teachers. Providing higher salaries is the first step to convince highly qualified teachers to join the public schools. The government should also look into giving fringe benefits to public school teachers that are similar to the ones given in private institutions. Furthermore, the schools should also provide professional development opportunities and intensive seminars or workshops for ineffective teachers. Moreover, the recruitment process for new teachers should be effective, while retention policies for current teachers to work in schools with greatest needs should be established.

2. Provide in-service training for Filipino teachers on the latest teaching innovations.

Ultimately, student performance depends on how teachers help students master the subject matter. There is a legislation requiring all educators from Ontario to take 14 courses every five years to be re-certified (Teacher re-certification, 1999) . The Philippine government may adopt a similar approach to raise the performance of teachers and students. Teacher re-education should include effective classroom management,

thorough subject matter knowledge, careful understanding of how children learn and a solid foundation in effective teaching methods. Effective teachers should establish an academically demanding climate, conduct an orderly, well-managed classroom, ensuring student success, and implement instructional practices that promote student achievement. Teachers who establish academic objectives elicit higher student achievement than teachers who fail to establish clear objectives, are unable to accomplish academic objectives due to poor management skills, or establish effective objectives (Brophy, 1986). The teacher is the critical link between the potential for all students to learn and the reality of students who do learn. Teachers, like all professionals, require opportunities to grow. Teachers cannot simply teach effectively throughout their careers without having ample opportunities to learn about the most recent pedagogical knowledge about teaching and learning. Our Filipino students need and deserve to be taught by teachers who teach courses in fields that match their formal background preparation. We need teachers who are up-to-date on the research available for effective teaching strategies. After all, it is the teacher who influences what students learn and how well they learn it. The Philippine government should be committed to provide educators with opportunities for continued and sustained professional development.

3. Improve classroom instruction through technology.

Technology supports diverse teaching methods and curricular materials to improve teaching methods and classroom practices. There is an abundance of high quality research on the internet that the teachers and students can benefit from studying.

In a study by Corcoran (1988), it was concluded that providing teachers with technology gave them a "renewed sense of hope, of commitment, [and] a belief that the government cared about them."

In a conference entitled "Key Strategies to Close the Gaps in Student Performance" held at the University of the State of New York in 2001, one proposal was to improve classroom instruction through technology. It was concluded in the conference that technology is the most promising vehicle to provide a diverse teaching force with information and curricular materials to improve teaching methods and classroom practices. Technology was seen as a tool that would ensure all teachers participate in unique training opportunities.

4. To truly aid in transforming our secondary school system, the government must establish high academic standards for all students.

Regardless of their socio-economic status in life, low-level coursework that fails to challenge students should be elimated while more rigorous courses in English and Math

should be introduced. Haycock (2001) stated that "the more rigorous courses a student takes, the more likely she or he is to achieve at high levels."

The latest study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (2001) indicated that of all the pre-college curricula, the highest level of mathematics a student learns in secondary school has the strongest continuing influence on the likelihood of a student's completion of a bachelor's degree. Although the recent findings in the study involved American students, I believe that it could be relevant to the Philippine setting as well.

5. Provide meaningful academic courses in all public schools.

Since their school expected less of them, their academic curriculum has been watered down significantly. Today, Filipino employers have higher academic expectations from their employees due to the rigid competition among businesses and lack of employment opportunities in the country. One way of helping the public school students is to provide them with high-quality vocational training aside from the general courses required by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. These students continue to complete the college-preparatory courses in the core subjects, but they will approach the material differently, providing alternative applied courses that cover the same material in a more hands-on way. The government should include bold measures such as allocating extra funds to increase the instructional time devoted to literacy and mathematics for the

low-performing students.

6. Improve the social and economic conditions of low-income families.

The problem lies with the politicians in this country. Do they have the political will to change public policies to improve the social and economic conditions of their poor constituents? The Philippines rank third in the list of most corrupt countries in the world (Monsod, 1996). Realistically speaking, the above-mentioned suggestion is difficult, if not impossible.

Nonetheless, schools can provide services to their students to help them overcome their deficits. Teachers of the disadvantaged students should provide a caring relationship centered on respect, understanding and kindness. Furthermore, they should provide positive and high expectations which can challenge students beyond what they believe they can do. The schools can also provide mentoring programs to help impart beliefs, values and attitudes to students with parents who lack the capacity to do so. Other strategies should also include increased academic intervention services, additional instructional time, additional support services and improved teacher attendance.

7. Adequate funding should be the major concern of both public and private educational institutions to help provide modern, safe and effective educational facilities for all students.

The school modernization and construction problems of public schools demand a strong and sustained partnership between school officials and the Department of Education. Without proper funding, many schools have no choice but to allow their school buildings and other facilities to continue deteriorating. Aside from government funding, schools can also use community engagement and outreach to generate support for funding school facilities improvements. The teachers of Woodland Hills can seek the support of the Chinese businessmen within their community.

Although schools cannot change these conditions, they can take steps to ameliorate the effects of poverty and related circumstances which affect so many children.

8. Schools should also opt for smaller class sizes.

This solution may result in budget problems. However, the researcher believes that there are significant and long-lasting costs associated with large class sizes such as lower levels of student achievement, more problems related to safety, violence and discipline and lower rates of attendance and graduation. This is in opposition to the benefits associated with small class sizes. Among the benefits are better student attendance, lower drop-out rates, higher self-regard of the students and fewer problems associated with discipline. (Cotton, 1996).

Implications

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, in her 2001 state of the nation address, promised to allocate PhP 90 billion to education. I recommend that the government, through the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), should focus on teacher quality and recruitment concerns. Probably the most difficult aspect to implement among my recommendations is for the instructors to teach in courses that match their formal educational training. One of the problems plaguing the country is brain drain. The Philippines loses a lot of highly educated people to countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, Filipino students deserve to be taught by the best teachers to enable them to be competitive.

A solution presented in the study is for the government to provide enough money in the public school system to attract qualified teachers. This would likely result in a more even dispersal of uncredentialed teachers rather than the highest concentrations in the lowest socioeconomic school districts.

The need for teachers to be constantly re-educated and re-certified may also spark debate as to who should shoulder the expenses. I personally believe that the teachers themselves should be held accountable for their own re-education and re-certification. However, I perceive that the following arguments may arise: written tests do not

accurately measure the teacher's skills in the classroom and the process is too expensive considering that the teaching profession is one of the lowest paying careers in the country. However, certified teachers will make a big difference in student achievement. Effective teaching can raise student achievement while ineffective teaching serves as a barrier.

The need for technology in the schools is also necessary. Technology is the most promising vehicle to help teachers provide quality instruction to their students. Although it can be very expensive, the benefits can be very fulfilling for both students and teachers. In the age of information, every Filipino student should have access to technology to make him or her globally competitive and meet the challenges of the changing world.

Although I stated earlier that the government should be committed to provide educators with opportunities, the *palakasan* (politics of power) system might defeat the purpose. It is sad to say, but in the Philippines it is "not what you know but who you know" that gets you ahead of the game.

As for the recommendation that high academic standards should be expected from all students regardless of their socio-economic status in life, there is a question of the students' intellectual abilities. Realistically speaking, public school students have been receiving low-level coursework since primary school. It might be too much to expect the public school students to be on par with their private school counterparts in terms of

academic abilities. However, it might help to devote extra time to enabling these poor students to more rigorous academic training. The elimination of low-level coursework should be gradual so as not to negatively impact the public school students' attitude toward school. If this is achieved, all Filipino students will have equal opportunities to land in jobs normally reserved for graduates of prestigious schools. If students are going to achieve a high standard, they need teachers who know the subjects and know how to teach the subjects. Teachers with the weakest academic foundations are often assigned to teach students in poor communities. The more rigorous courses a student takes, the more likely she or he is to achieve at high levels. The problems facing students in poor areas are severe. By addressing the content of the curriculum and the preparation of teachers, these young people can be prepared for economic success.

Improving the social and economic conditions of Filipino families is one of the most difficult propositions in this study. Graft and corruption are deeply imbedded in the political system of the country. Nonetheless, the teachers can still help improve their students' lives when they devote extra time and effort to help them. To help build the foundation skills of the students, teachers need to double or even triple the amount and quality of instruction. This can have a tremendous impact on how students achieve in the classrooms, despite the incredible odds against them. If this is done, we can examine what

might be possible if teachers are truly committed to equity and high quality education for all children.

Politicians recognize that the public is deeply concerned about improving the quality of education. There could be no better time at which to raise issues related to inequality in funding and the need to focus upon expanding educational opportunities as a way of reducing social inequality. The time is ripe for the Filipinos to make their voices heard to help education be a source of hope and opportunity. A number of studies (Edwards, 1991; Cash, 1993) have shown that many school systems, particularly those in urban and high poverty areas, are plagued by decaying buildings that threaten the health, safety, and learning opportunities of students. Good facilities will be an important precondition for student learning and will hopefully increase student achievement. Hines (1996) found that there is a relationship between building condition and student achievement. Student achievement was as much as 11 percentile points lower in substandard buildings as compared to above-standard buildings. Adequate facilities can also positively impact the teachers. Corcoran (1988) found that where the problems with working conditions are serious enough to impinge on the work of teachers, they result in higher absenteeism, reduced levels of effort, lower effectiveness in the classroom, low morale, and reduced job satisfaction. Where working conditions are good, they result in

enthusiasm, high morale, cooperation, and acceptance of responsibility. Inadequate and deteriorating facilities are reflections of the government's lack of priority for the poor children and their education. The government bespeaks neglect and the students' misconducts and underachievement can simply be an extension of the physical environment that surrounds them.

Overcrowded schools are a serious problem in the Philippines. As a result, students find themselves trying to learn while jammed into spaces never intended for classrooms. As a matter of fact, there is a common saying in the Philippines that the "children are taught under the mango tree." Overcrowding can have an adverse impact on learning because classroom activities and instructional techniques cannot be effectively employed by the teachers. If the government can find solutions to limit class sizes, students can concentrate on their lessons. Furthermore, the teachers can spend time on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work.

Revised conceptual model

The original conceptual model of the relationship between academic achievement of students and their social class presented as model 1.1 on page 35 proved to be helpful during the data analysis phase of this study.

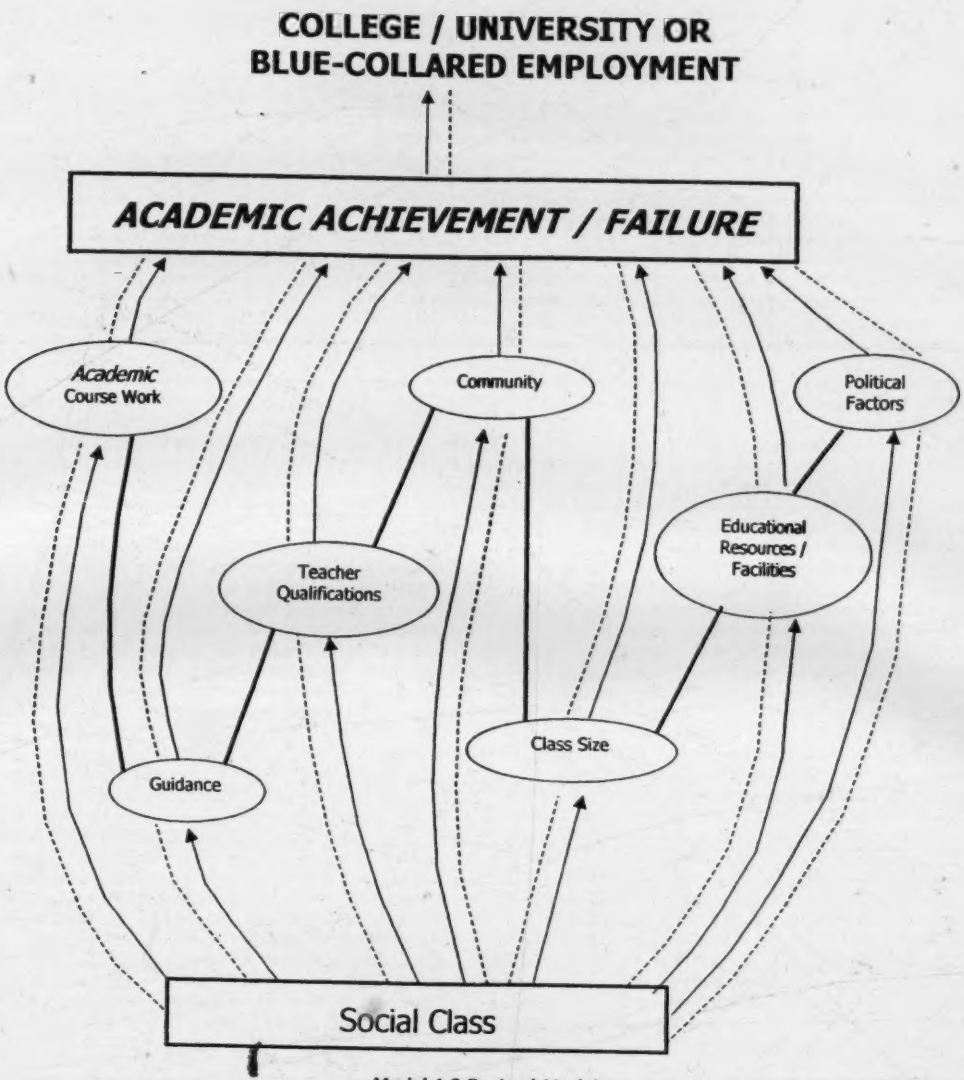
As I reflected on how themes emerged from the data analysis, I found that

different factors in the original model were broadly presented. The model did not explicitly identify the school-related factors that impact a student's achievement or failure in the classroom.

In revising the conceptual framework (presented as model 1.2 on page 119), I have included the following:

1. The different school-related factors that directly affected a student's achievement or failure
2. The interlinking of the different factors
3. The ultimate "destination" of a high school graduate based on his educational experiences

Based on the data that I collected, the new model would not have changed the outcomes of this study. However, if I were to start the process again based on the revised conceptual model, I would change some of the questions that I have asked during the interviews, and would have added other questions.



Model 1.2 Revised Model

Personal reflections

Education is a vital weapon of a people striving for economic emancipation, political independence, and cultural renascence. Philippine education, therefore, must produce Filipinos who are aware of their country's problems, who understand the basic solutions to these problems, and who care enough and have courage enough to work and sacrifice for their country's salvation.

Coming from a country where there is an unequal distribution of wealth amongst its citizens, I was convinced that my study should focus on a topic that would help Philippine educators improve their educational practices that often have the effect of favoring the privileged students and hindering the educational opportunities of poorer students.

As evidenced from the findings of my study, the educational experiences of the affluent and the economically deprived students are very different. The affluent students are more than satisfied with the type of education they receive while most of the economically deprived students do not even wish to be associated with their school.

Closing the gap between the affluent and the economically deprived requires the government's commitment. Priorities should include effective recruitment and retraining policies for teachers, access to technology, elimination of low level coursework, improvement of school facilities and implementation of smaller class sizes.

Schools alone cannot solve the problem of the educational gaps between the affluent and the economically deprived. Thus, public policy makers, parents and every Filipino need to be provided with quality and substantive information in order to be persuaded that bridging the gap is necessary to advance the social and economic goals of the country. What the Philippines need is to encourage more critical thinking, to help students define themselves more clearly in the context of their society and of the larger and ever-changing world. We also need to teach students compassion and social responsibility so that education becomes a bridge, rather than a chasm, across society, regardless of one's status in life.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

Interview Guide for the Student Informants:

How long have you been enrolled in this school?
What do you want to do after graduating?
What it is like being a student in this school? (prompt: academic, social sporting, clubs)
What do you think makes this school different from other schools?
Please give me a brief sketch of a typical teacher at this school.
Please give me a brief sketch of a typical student at this school.
What are the expectations of teachers and school officials for you?
What do you think this school is preparing you for?
What makes classes challenging at this school?
What makes classes easy at this school?
What does the term "academic achievement" mean to you?
What factors influence a student's "academic achievement"?
If I were a new student at this school, what would you tell me to help me adjust to the school?
Can you think of a metaphor describes what it is like being a student at this high school?
What influence does level of financial resources of a family have upon (a) student's success in school and (b) student's opportunity to proceed to college?

Interview Guide for Teacher Informants:

Where did you grow up? Tell me about where you came from?
What type of college did you attend?
What degrees have you earned?
Why did you decide to teach at this school?
What were the challenges during your first year at this school?
What advise would you give me if I were a new teacher here?
What are the students like?
What is the faculty like?
What do you teach in your classroom to prepare your students for the world? (prompts: Knowledge? Attitudes? Skills?)
What types of employment are your students being prepared for?
What does "academic achievement" mean to you?
What do you do in your teaching to reflect your understanding of academic achievement?
What is your philosophy for your teaching?
What are your expectations for your students?
Please describe a typical student who (a) succeeds well in your class and (b) does poorly in your class.
Who fails in your classes?
What is expected from a student in your class?
Can you think of a metaphor which describes what it is like being a teacher at this high school.

Appendix B

Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

TITLE OF THE STUDY: EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
OF THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED AND AFFLUENT STUDENTS

Dear Sir/Ma'am:

Your son/daughter is invited to participate in a study geared towards understanding the differences and similarities of the educational experiences of students from two different social classes. My name is Awit Arzadon-Dalusong and I am a doctoral student at The University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, Department of Educational Policy Studies. This study is a requirement for my degree –Doctor of Education in Administration of Postsecondary Education. I am asking for permission to include your son/daughter in this study because this study should help educators understand the different influences which affect the academic achievement of students and thus, would enable them to provide your children better services that are attuned to their individual needs. I expect to have 8 participants in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I will conduct interviews during your child's free time inside the school campus. Moreover, I will also observe him/her during their classroom classes. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your son/daughter will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. His or her responses will not be linked to his or her name or your name in any written or verbal report of this research project.

Your decision to allow your son/daughter to participate will not affect your or his or her present or future relationship with the school. If you have any questions about the study, please ask me. If you have any questions later, call me at 522-0143. If you have any questions or concerns about your son/daughter's participation in this study, please contact Dr. Mike Andrews, my supervisor, at mike.andrews@ualberta.ca

You may keep the copy of this consent form.

You are making a decision about allowing your son/daughter to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. If you later decide that

you wish to withdraw your permission for your son/daughter to participate in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue his or her participation at any time.

Respectfully yours,

Awit Arzadon-Dalusong
Researcher

Printed Name of (son/daughter)

Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian Date

Appendix C

Consent Form for Participants

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study: EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED AND AFFLUENT STUDENTS

Researcher: Awit Arzadon-Dalusong under the supervision of Mike Andrews, PhD
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB Canada

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to establish the differences and similarities in the students' understanding of their educational experiences within their academic communities (to enable the researcher to examine the relationship between class status of students and their educational experiences).

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

As a participant of this study, you will be interviewed several times during your free time within the school premises during the course of the research. Also, the researcher will observe your classes to familiarize herself with the classroom dynamics.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships your school.

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should I call if I have

questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: Awit Arzadon-Dalusong at 522-0143. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time. Throughout the study, the researcher will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Mike Andrews, Ph.D., Supervisor, University of Alberta at mike.andrews@ualberta.ca

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

In the interviews or sessions that will be audio or videotaped, the cassettes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them; they will be kept in a secure place; they will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the researcher; and they will be erased after they are transcribed or coded.

You are making a decision about allowing yourself to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your participation in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue your participation at any time.

Awit Arzadon-Dalusong
Researcher

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Signature of Participant **Date**

Appendix D

Letter to the Principals

Dear Sir/Ma'am:

I am Awit Arzadon-Dalusong, a doctoral student from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. I am interested to conduct my study entitled Educational Experiences of the Economically Deprived and Affluent Students in your school. This study is a requirement for my degree, Doctor of Education in Administration of Postsecondary Education.

I am asking for your permission to allow four of your senior high school students and two of their teachers to participate in this study. Also, I would like to observe them in their classes twice a week. If you allow your students and teachers to participate, I will conduct the interviews during their free time and inside the campus. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified to your school will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Responses of your students and teachers will not be linked to the name of your school in any written or verbal report of this research project.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at (075) 522-0143 or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mike Andrews, at mike.andrews@ualberta.ca.

Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Awit Arzadon-Dalusong
Researcher